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# **The role of NGOs in fighting child poverty: A case study of slums in Meru town, Kenya.**

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Master of Science International Development Studies

**The role of NGOs in fighting child poverty: A case study of slums in Meru town, Kenya.**



Photo: A slum house in Meru town, Kenya.

Eric Kimathi

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## **Declaration**

I, Eric Kimathi, declare that this thesis is a result of my own research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my family particularly my Mum Naomi who has been a true embodiment of resilience and hard work.

## **Acknowledgement**

Writing this thesis has been a significant challenge but equally a very rewarding academic experience. Despite being an individual task, it required concerted input from several key individuals. While it might be impossible to mention all of them, some crediting is inevitable.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

APHRC	African Population and Health Research Center
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CCIs	Charitable Children’s Institutions
CSP	Child Sponsorship Program
ECD	Early Childhood Development
HDI	Human Development Index
KENSUP	Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme
KNBS	Kenya National bureau of Statistics
KSPS	Kenya Social Protection Strategy
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MODA	Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHIF	National Hospital Insurance Fund
NPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
ODA	Official Donor Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
USD	United States Dollar
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YMCA	Young Men Christian Associations
YWCA	Young Women Christian Associations



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## **Abstract**

In the last few decades increased attention has been focused on child poverty with robust policies and financial resources invested on the most vulnerable communities. This notwithstanding, children continue to experience deprivations in nutrition, education and healthcare and access to safe water which greatly compromises their growth and development and risks their future. While slum people are among those who suffer from extreme poverty, it is the children who remain the most vulnerable. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of NGOs in combating child poverty in the slums of Meru, Town Kenya. The study adopted qualitative research method in a case study design and used both primary and secondary data sources for this study. The study had a sample size of 48 participants including 40 NGO beneficiaries, 6 NGO officials and 2 county government officials. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the primary data while secondary data sources included policy documents and newspaper articles. Study findings revealed that child poverty was not perceived any differently from poverty in general, but the participants focused more on elements of multidimensional poverty in terms of various aspects of deprivation. The study found that while the Kenyan government has a range of policies, there lacks a cohesive approach to work with NGOs while the current frame conditions for NGOs are enabling and restrictive at the same time. Moreover, the study found that NGO programmes are service driven towards provision of education, health, micro-finance and cash transfers however they remain largely fragmented due to selective targeting of beneficiaries. The study found that NGOs are making a considerable contribution towards child poverty, however their programmes are limited to a small population and not comprehensive enough to address structural elements of poverty. Besides, findings indicate that NGOs face challenges of non-cooperative beneficiaries and are perceived as elitist. The study concludes that slum child poverty cannot be addressed through increased service provision alone but rather via integration of provision and democracy-building through public participation, within a framework that draws the attention of the state to the social-economic and political exclusion of slum dwellers. The study further concludes that it is crucial for NGOs to explore the possibility to partner with the state in financing slums projects or possibly channeling their resources to the state to facilitate a more comprehensive approach to slum programmes.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Background of the study

The scope of NGO operations has considerably expanded in recent times particularly with strategic focus on structural issues of power and inequality and expansion of civil society against hegemonic unrepresentative states. However, the greatest shift of NGOs has been towards technical and managerial solutions to social issues such as poverty through service delivery and welfare provision (Banks and Hulme, 2012). According to the World Bank (2008) slum residents in Kenya score poorly on non-income measures of poverty coupled with high unemployment levels and with a minority of the population having attained secondary level education. According to (UN-Habitat 2003, APHRC, 2014) slums provide housing to urban residents who earn low incomes and have limited assets and their characteristics include lack of access to improved water, access to improved sanitation facilities, sufficient living area, and structural quality/durability of dwellings and security of tenure.

World Bank (2008) asserts that housing units in the slums are shabby and crowded, yet rents are high, absorbing a sizeable fraction of household budget. For instance, data from two large informal settlements (Korogocho and Viwandani) (APHRC, 2014) reveal that while there has been markedly improvements in environmental, health and educational indicators among slum dwellers, the improvements have not been consistent and uniform leaving out subgroups such as young uneducated women. For instance, children born in slums have lower birth weights than their counterparts at the national level while immunization coverage are equally low at only 45% for 12-month-old babies while maternal deaths are above average among slums families attributed to lack of healthcare facilities and severe poverty linked to poor nutrition and contaminated water (APHRC, 2014). In Kenya, poverty rates are the highest in rural areas (49.7%) compared to urban areas at (34.4%), although people living in informal urban settlements often experience greater deprivation than rural residents (Oxfam, 2009, KNBS, 2014). In fact, the World Bank (2018) reveals that the proportion of Kenyans living on less than the international poverty line (US\$1.90 per day in 2011 PPP) has declined from 46.8% in 2005/06 to 36.1% in 2015/16. The World Bank doubts Kenya's ability to eradicate poverty by 2030 as indicated in the government's vision 2030 economic blue print. According to KNBS and UNICEF (2017) the prevalence of child poverty measured in terms

of deprivations stands at 45 % of all children translating to 9.5 million children in Kenya who are severely deprived in at least three or more basic needs for their wellbeing.

This study will use child poverty in terms of the multidimensional deprivations across aspects such as education, health, housing, water and sanitation as used by KNBS and UNICEF (2017). APHRC (2014) assert that substantial attention and resources have been invested in the past decade by the state, NGOs and other partners towards improving health and economic outcomes of Kenyans following the push for achievement of MDGs and accountability from the Kenyan government. For example, specific slum programmes such as the Kenya slum upgrade initiative, cash transfers, free delivery service, free slum non-formal schooling interventions have been implemented by the government's line ministries in collaboration with UNICEF, UNAIDS, Pamoja Trust among other partners (APHRC, 2014). Despite the apparent interventions, the (APHRC, 2014) report contend that slum populations continue to increase exponentially amidst the widespread poverty and precarious living conditions. APHRC (2014) reports that one third of urban dwellers in the world, live in informal settlements or slums, characterized by overcrowding, social and economic marginalization, poor environmental conditions, insecurity and near absence of basic social services. Moreover, statistics from UN-Habitat (2016) point out that 56 per cent of Kenya's urban population lives in slums especially in the largest cities which is relatively higher than the average global estimate of 43% according to (Bird, Montebruno and Regan, 2017). It is inevitable that new strategies are needed towards addressing the needs of slum residents towards combating poverty in Kenyan cities. Mahabir, Crooks, Croitoru and Agouris (2016) argue that the poor conditions within slums and the challenges they pose to slum residents continues to be recognized as a global and ethical challenge and suggests that policies and systems need to be established to protect and improve the lives of slum dwellers.

In the early 2000s, Kenya developed the National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) under the auspices of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (TIAPD, 2009). The implications of these policy papers led to better understanding of poverty due to the broad-based approach adopted by the working teams. Nevertheless, they did not lead to poverty reduction which was the main target. Munyao (2013) attributed this to the failure to implement institutional changes toward incorporating the PRSP targets such as budget distribution and efficient management of resources besides lack of political goodwill. The objective number one of the Millennium

Development Goals (Millennium Development Goals, UN 2000) aimed at reducing extreme poverty rates by half. The development chapter of the Millennium Declaration signed by 189 states which led to the Millennium Development Goals begins by stating that,

*“We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected”* (UN, 2000, pg. 4)

This was hailed as a landmark effort to combat poverty globally. Fukuda-Parr and Hulme (2011) argue that MDGs have been hailed as carrying a powerful global anti-poverty agenda because firstly they elucidated concrete human conditions which people could empathize with and secondly, they had quantified timelines for which they were to be executed and thirdly, the goals were minimal i.e. eight in number and arguably easy to remember and work with, however this seems a simplistic argument since the number should not determine how easy or difficult it takes to achieve the goal. However, Hulme (2010) argue that despite the impressive progress in certain parts of the developing world, the MDGs have consistently been criticized for being technocratic and top-down and failing to consider the context-specific needs of the poor. Fast forward, post-MDGs efforts towards poverty eradication were advanced with the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goal number 1 which aims at reducing poverty at least by half of the entire population living in poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). More importantly, the slogan ‘leave no one behind’ as highlighted in the preamble of the SDGs (United Nations, 2015, pg.5) calls on efforts for countries to achieve economic growth that benefits everyone (ODI, 2015). In this regard, UNICEF (2016) calls to action for countries to create sustainable societies whose children are safe, educated and healthy.

The government of Kenya launched the Kenya Slum Upgrading Program (KENSUP) in 2004 with the objective providing physical, social, economic, organizational and environmental improvements as a means of enhancing the living conditions of slum dwellers (Candiracci and Syrjanen, 2007). The government promised to construct 150,000 housing units annually, of which about 60,000 would benefit slum dwellers, while the rest would seek to address inadequate urban and rural housing. Moreover, the Government planned to provide funds to kick start personal entrepreneurial startups in partnership with development partners (Kenya Social Protection Strategy, 2008) although the initiative has faced challenges as the rent



charged to live within multi-story units are relatively expensive and unaffordable to most of the current slum residents (World Bank, 2008). Besides, it seems illogical to build high cost rental units that cost more than what people are paying in the slums and yet the housing programme is not meant to make them house owners yet 92 % of slums residents are tenants (World Bank, 2008). In this light, despite the efforts of KSPS strategy to enhance the long-term capacity of poor and vulnerable households to meet their basic consumption needs and to improve access to basic services towards addressing poverty the World Bank (2008) terms Kenya's social protection policies and programs as largely underdeveloped.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

The government of Kenya through the Kenya Slum Upgrade Programme (KENSUP) has undertaken slum-upgrading projects in several urban areas since 2004 in collaboration with various NGOs in a bid to address the slum poverty (Candiracci and Syrjanen, 2007). While there have been consistent efforts from the Kenyan government and NGOs to address slum issues such as improved water supply, sanitation, food security and education, little gains have been achieved in the wider transformation agenda to fight child poverty in the slums. Oxfam (2009) cites uncoordinated implementation of programmes, lack of clear mandate among the many players operating in the urban sector and the absence of a robust urban development policy in Kenya. As a result, Oxfam (2009) indicate that slum dwellers are among the poorest people in Kenya and will represent half of the total poverty by 2020 if effective mitigation measures are not undertaken. More concern lies in the long-term effects that slum poverty pose to the holistic development of children. Continued existence in slum conditions exposes children to unsafe water sources and unhygienic surroundings making them more vulnerable to diseases such as cholera and diarrhea. Moreover, children in urban areas are at a higher risk of lacking access to essential services such as education and health, water, sanitation and housing even when they live close to them (UNICEF, 2016). NGOs have been among the key players working to address child poverty in the slums (Banks, Hulme and Edwards, 2015) however, there exists fundamental questions regarding their ability to meet long-term slum transformation. There are concerns that NGOs remain poorly placed to influence the real drivers of social change because they are hindered by lack of legitimacy and the dynamics within aid architecture which force them to account to donors instead of local communities. The purpose of this study therefore was to investigate the role of NGOs in combating child poverty in the slums of Meru town, Kenya.

### **1.3 Research objectives and questions**

1. To investigate the meaning of poverty according to NGOs and slum dwellers.
  - a. How do NGOs and slum people define child poverty and poverty in general?
2. To assess the Kenyan policy in relation to NGOs work in alleviating child poverty.
  - a. What are the frame conditions for the NGOs working in Kenyan slums?
  - b. What is the relationship between the NGOs and government agencies?
3. To find out the kind of programmes do the NGOs operate to fight child poverty in the slums?
  - a. What kind of programmes do NGO implement to fight child poverty in slums?
  - b. What specific activities do NGOs use to achieve the objectives of these programmes?
4. To assess the effectiveness of NGO programmes in alleviating child poverty in slums.
  - a. What is the impact of NGO programmes in alleviating child poverty?
  - b. What are the main obstacles facing NGO programmes?

### **1.4 Rationale of the study**

The findings of this study will highlight the need for further research in child poverty in the slums. Moreover, I hope that it will inform future policy within the state, NGOs and other stakeholders combating child poverty in the slums. Nevertheless, I am aware that this is a relatively small research study whose findings are not generalizable. I hope that finding of this study will create personal insight on the status of life among people living in slums in Meru and increase understanding on the role of NGOs in fighting child poverty in particular in medium and small urban settings since focus is largely on big cities.

### **1.5 Scope of the study**

I set the scope of this study to cover 4 NGOs, 6 NGO representatives, 41 NGO Programme beneficiaries i.e. parents/guardians all from slums within Meru town and 2 Meru county government officials.

### **1.6 Thesis outline**

This thesis is organised in five chapters beginning with chapter one which highlights introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study. This is followed by chapter two which

contains the conceptual framework and reviewed literature on child poverty, NGOs and development theory, slums as a policy issue, effectiveness of NGOs, NGOs as partners or competitors of the state and challenges facing NGOs. Chapter three highlights the research methodology. The topics covered under this section include: the research context; research paradigm and design; research participants; research settings; data collection tools and procedures; data analysis procedures; validity issues, researcher's identity, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter four covers the presentation of the main findings of the study with the following sub topic: understanding poverty, Kenyan policy and frame conditions for NGOs, NGO programmes and activities, effectiveness of NGOs in the slums. Chapter five covers the discussion of the study in the context of theory and relevant literature reviewed in chapter two and lastly, chapter six present the conclusions of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter contains definition of key concepts and reviewed literature on child poverty, slums as a policy issue, NGOs and development theory, effectiveness of NGOs, NGO programmes and activities and challenges facing NGOs.

#### 2.1 Definition of key concepts

##### NGOs

Private voluntary grouping of individuals, not operated for profit or for other commercial purposes, but which have organized themselves nationally or internationally for the benefit of the public at large and for the promotion of social welfare, development charity or research in the areas inclusive of, but not restricted to, health, relief, agriculture, education, industry and the supply of amenities and services (Kenyan NGO Act, 2012).

Vakil (1997 pg. 2060) states too that NGOs are self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared towards improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people.

##### Urban Poverty

Nair and Radhakrishnan (2004 pg.227) define urban poverty as the outcome of a combination of several kinds of insecurity or handicap that affect several aspects of daily life such as access to employment, housing, health care, education, culture, justice and family protection usually characterized by substandard housing, overcrowding, poor water, sanitation and sewage disposal facilities.

##### Child Poverty

UNICEF and KNBS (2017), states that child poverty refers to the non-fulfillment of the rights listed in the UNCRC (UN, 1989) measured by use of the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) methodology which measures poverty at individual level rather than household level where different dimensions and indicators of child deprivation for different age groups of children considering their needs vary depending on age. Similarly, UNICEF (2005, pg. 18), rather than using the concept child poverty instead uses “children living in poverty” which encompasses the experience of deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy

their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society. This thesis is largely inclined towards the concept of children living in poverty as defined by UNICEF because of its all-inclusive approach to all deprivations that children face.

### **Slums**

The UN-Habitat (2015, pg.2) defines a slum as a household or a group of individuals living under the same roof facing one or more of these deprivations: lack of access to improved water, lack of access to improved sanitation facilities, insufficient living area (not overcrowded), lack of durable housing and lack of security of tenure.

## **2.2 Child Poverty**

To understand child poverty, statistics and definitions are crucial. According to UNDP (1990), the concept of poverty is complex and tends to elicit conflicting definitions and considerable disagreement in terms of framings, methodologies, and measurements. These confusions involve aspects of poverty at the individual or collective level such as income, capabilities, and quality of life (Laderchi et al, 2003). Hall and Midgley (2004) argue that one-dimension poverty is referred to as income poverty because the focus is on the level of consumption of food, access to shelter and clothing for survival with the sole aim of quantifying these aspects of livelihood into a currency threshold usually agreed universally. In contrast, Lang and Lingnau (2015) posit that multi-dimension poverty focuses on composite issues related to inadequacies in various spheres of life such as living standards, job, medical-health, income, nutrition, education, housing and assets, power and security among others. In recent time, poverty measurements have gained ability to capture multidimensional characteristics of poverty particularly deprivations such as hunger, illiteracy, unclean drinking water, lack of access to health, credit, or legal services, social exclusion, and disempowerment have revolutionised the analytical lens to the dynamics of poverty and its institutionalization within social and political norms (World Bank, 2001).

World Bank (2018) posits that about 1 out of 3 people in Kenya live below the international poverty line US\$ 1.90 reached at via measurements of household purchasing power parity. Hickel (2015) assert that what counts as poverty (the 'poverty line) is normally calculated by each country and is supposed to reflect the total cost of all of the essential resources that an average human adult need to subsist and tends to omit the element of the cost of essentials per child. However, measuring multidimensional poverty is complex and faces several challenges. The United Nations (2014) assert that the use of household surveys risk

undermining the poverty estimates since there exist inequalities between those who are counted and those who are left out. Similarly, Carr-Hill (2013) acknowledges that it is possible that some groups may be underrepresented including slum dwellers. While income-based poverty measures provide a fair sense of which part of the population may have unmet needs and where they are located, these measures however fail to capture the dynamic aspects of poverty in terms of the cause and extent of deprivation, risk factors and the coping strategies employed (Baker and Schuler, 2004). Baker and Schuler (2004) highlight that education (literacy and enrollment rates), health (life expectancy), housing (water supply and sewage facilities), income (inequality and population under the poverty line) and infant mortality are key indicators that can be used as an analytical framework to measure poverty.

Statistics indicate that 9.5 million Kenyan children (45%) experienced child poverty by 2014 in which 19% lived in urban areas (UNICEF and KNBS, 2017). In general, UNICEF (2016) asserts that if the world does not tackle inequity, over 167 million children will live in extreme poverty by 2030. According to (UNICEF and World Bank, 2016), children are more than twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty. White, Leavy and Masters (2003) assert that two reasons make it important that child poverty is central to poverty reduction strategies. Firstly, children form one-third of population in developing countries. Secondly, children are the largest minority group whose voice is often unheard despite their numbers therefore making it essential to focus on their rights. The very first global debate on child poverty took place at The World Summit for Children, attended by 159 country countries and 71 heads of state or government. During the summit, a declaration and plan of action including goals related to infant and maternal mortality, childhood malnutrition, access to basic services for health and family planning, education, and water and sanitation were adopted (UNICEF, 1990). UNICEF (2005) points out that although children are the hardest hit, child poverty is rarely differentiated from poverty in general and its special dimensions are seldom recognized but the concept “children living in poverty” is predominantly used instead. The concept of “children living in poverty” is based on child rights as entrenched in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). In this context, deprivations of children’s rights to survival, health and nutrition, education, participation, and protection from harm, exploitation and discrimination is perceived as child poverty. UNCRC (1989) was adopted by the UN General Assembly and ratified by all countries except the USA and Somalia and declares that all children have rights regardless of their circumstances (UNICEF,

2005). In this regard, it seeks to guarantee rights to education, healthcare, decent housing, clean water, housing, education and non-discrimination among others (UNICEF, 2005). In this light, the convention holds the bearers as responsible for ensuring that children's rights are fulfilled and protected.

UNICEF and KNBS (2017) assert that the latest surveys in Kenya indicate that sanitation, housing and water were the highest contributors of child poverty followed nutrition health, stunting and education. UNICEF (2016) contends that when viewed from the perspective of a child, the exact definition of poverty becomes immaterial because being deprived is damaging to a child's development, particularly when deprivations are experienced in early childhood years. It is argued that deprivations that begin in childhood can be felt throughout lifetime in which children who grow up deprived not only have limited opportunities to fulfil their potential but are also likely to fall into the same poverty cycle (UNICEF, 2016). Accordingly, the children's experience of risk and deprivation is shaped by four broad characteristics of childhood poverty and vulnerability, multidimensionality, embracing both monetary and non-monetary aspects of poverty, changes over the course of the lifecycle, the relational nature of childhood derived from the situation of dependence on adults, and the voiceless-ness that characterises children's status in society (UNICEF, 2009). Hirsch (2006) claim that the main influences on the level of child poverty are demographic processes, family formation, unemployment rates, benefit and retraining levels, childcare services and housing costs, which are determined by the economy and/or government social policy. Therefore, expanding the definition of child poverty beyond traditional conceptualizations, such as low household income or low levels of consumption is particularly important. Besides, Banik and Hansen (2016) argue that examining why extreme poverty continues to persist in the poorest countries of the world mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa is a possible beginning point to understanding why combating poverty continues to be a challenge.

### **2.3 NGOs and Development Theory**

Lewis and Kanji (2009) asserts that NGOs have usually been associated more with development practice than with development theory. I find it significant to look at NGOs in relation to the state and the broader trends within the evolution of thinking about development, because linking NGOs to theoretical ideas about development makes it possible

to gain critical insight into the world of development NGOs (Lewis and Kanji, 2009) which are part of this study.

### **2.3.1 NGOs and dependency theory**

According to Peet and Hartwick (2015), dependency theory is anchored on a neo-Marxist ideology which a relationship between the third world countries and their Europe or western counterparts is portrayed as being fundamental for them to become modernised. Apparently, the historical European civilization of the world brought with it exploitation of valuable resources and loss of control of social institutions in most developing countries and consequently resulted in dependence on the rich western nations since most states could no longer sustain themselves (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). The notion of dependency aligns within the Marxists perspective that the difference between the modern world and Africa is purely technological and determined by the international division of labour where the west expects the developing countries to provide labour and raw materials for their expansive industries while developing countries consumes products from the West (Peet and Hartwick, 2015). Critics of dependency theory argue that it underestimates possible internal factors that could influence development in these countries, moreover dependency theory focuses on issues around official development aid (ODA) from the developed world and the power interplay within global politics that comes with aid (Peet and Hartwick, 2015).

Moyo (2009) asserts that we live in a world with a culture of aid in which those who are better off subscribe both mentally and financially to the notion that giving alms to the poor is the right thing to do. She argues that every year billions of dollars of development-related aid are transferred from rich countries to Africa and partly distributed as charity to institutions or people in their communities. She observes that sub-Saharan African countries received more than US\$300 billion in development assistance since 1970, however the poverty rate rose from 11 per cent to a staggering 66 per cent with many countries experiencing annual economic growth rate of minus 0.2 per cent. Moyo (2009) is deeply unconvinced that humanitarian aid is the way to resolve the poverty crisis within poor African countries. In the same vain, Shanmugaratnam (1995) posit that international organisations and governments have continuously raised financial resources to send to Africa for poverty alleviation and eradication programmes, education, medical services and establishment of infrastructure. Nevertheless, lack of capacity, corruption, volatile markets, political instability and harsh climatic conditions has been blamed for Africa's relatively slow development and soaring



poverty making many countries in sub-Saharan African overly dependent on donor aid. Lipton and Teye (1990), do not agree with the belief that foreign aid increases the potential of a country's economic growth and development. They assert that domestic capital supersedes foreign aid capital and more importantly suggest that countries should shun aid because foreign aid led growth models are biased towards the capital-intensive growth strategy which disregards the myriad of the sociocultural, political and global obstacles to development, inadequate level of technology, non-established banking and financial institutions, inaccurate government policies and structural rigidities which all prove that addressing poverty is not just a matter of capital. Peet and Hartwick (2015) posit that dependency theory seems totalizing and homogenising since it seems to put all developing world within one basket despite their apparent differences. As a result, dependency theory is unreliable in that it does not offer meaningful solutions to the problems developing countries face in development. The dependency theory in the context of NGOs and urban slums can be construed to mean that the existing provider/recipient relationship from usually international funded NGOs is likely to continue because of the power dynamics and possible lack of local strategies to deal with it. Lewis and Kanji (2009) state that dependency theory is not directly connected to NGOs however NGOs being part of social movements are crucial forces for liberation and revolutionary change.

### **2.3.2 NGOs and neoliberalism**

NGOs have gained prominence due to the apparent failure of the state to consolidate effective development policies particularly due to bureaucracy, unaccountability and irresponsibility to people's needs (Farah, Kiamba and Mazongo, 2011; Bukenya and Hickey, 2014). Moreover, NGOs offered a more flexible funding channel offering a potentially higher chance of local-level implementation and grassroots participation since they are locally located and therefore closer to the marginalized people than most state agencies (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). However, while donors and development organisations advocated for a reduced role of the state for market forces to take over, it was soon realized that in most African countries the private sector existed in small, profitable market niches therefore excluding the majority population (Bukenya and Hickey, 2014). As a result, development NGOs were singled out by donors as favorable alternatives in the drive to privatize provision of social services. In this regard they NGOs came in to fill in the gap that the market forces could not fill especially amongst the unreachable populations disadvantaged by poverty (Bratton, 1989). In this light,

Farah, Kiamba and Mazongo (2011) posit that the key objective of neoliberalism is to make people believe in the power of the markets as the most efficient allocator of production resources. Besides, neoliberals contend that forces of demand and supply must be allowed to play a leading role to achieve an efficient and effective economy. Lewis and Kanji (2009) points out that NGOs were perceived to be cost effective and an efficient alternative to the state and therefore became key players in the process of implementing the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) which the World Bank and IMF imposed on poor countries as part of loan conditionality requiring them to drastically cut back on public expenditure on social services and adopt market liberalization for foreign investment and reduced barriers to trade. The SAPs were criticized for increasing poverty and NGOs became part of the voices that called for a broader vision to development citing the need for increased funding for basic services such as education, health and efforts to compensate for vulnerable groups. The outcome of this was the development of the “Human Development Index” by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1990). As a result, UNDPs concept of poverty broadened to combine material and non-material things. Neoliberal development ideas place much emphasis on organizational technologies as a means for increasing aid effectiveness and stress the need for reform within aid architecture. For instance, new forms of engagement such as budget support and poverty reduction strategies have since become the norm between donors and governments and organizations (Mosse, 2005).

### **2.3.3 NGOs and contemporary theories**

Due to the failure of dependency and modernization theories academicians realized that new paths of explaining development were needed based on updated and more pragmatic thinking and concepts (Booth, 1994). In this light, new approaches emerged as part of alternative development influenced by post modernism discourses anchored on the idea that can be no generalized answers and solutions to development problems (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). For instance, feminist research emerged to reveal how the traditional approaches of development had excluded and undermined women’s role in development. For instance, Lewis and Kanji (2009) assert that feminist research was at the center of exposing the negative social consequences of neoliberal policies faced by women as the cost of social reproduction increasingly shifted from state responsibility to women. In this light, the feminists view NGOs in the light of the need to advance gender equality issues, empowerment and bottom-up approach towards equitable development. Another emerging theory has been social

exclusion in which proponents argue that it offers a comprehensive way of looking at different forms of disadvantage usually dealt with in a fragmented way (Kabeer, 2005). The social exclusion framework is crucial particularly to NGOs in that it draws their attention to the need for appropriate institutional responses to social disadvantages which receives little attention within neoliberal dispensation which seeks to reduce state responsibility in poverty eradication agenda.

## **2.4 Slums as a policy issue**

The UN-Habitat report on “The Challenge of Slums” noted that

*“The immensity of the challenge posed by slums is clear and daunting. Without serious and concerted action on the part of municipal authorities, national governments, civil society actors and the international community, the numbers of slum dwellers are likely to increase in most developing countries” (UN-Habitat, 2003 pg, xxvi)*

Even though not a recent phenomenon, the continued widespread growth of slums or informal urban settlements particularly in the developing world became a central policy issue during the last two decades. Accordingly, slums are considered a persistent issue and represent part of the unfinished business of the MDGs or part of the “old” urban agenda (UN-Habitat, 2003). According to the UN-Habitat (2016), the favelas of Brazil and the huge, unserviced settlements of Nairobi caught the world’s imagination and received widespread attention through the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000). It is on this basis that the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) number 11 target 11.1 seeks to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums by 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

The inability of the urban economies to expand to commensurate the increasing population leads to overurbanization (Knox and McCarthy, 2011; Forkuor and Agyemang, 2018). According to Government of Kenya (2008), the Kenyan housing sector is characterized by the absence of adequate, affordable and decent housing particularly for low-income earners in urban areas and extensive and inappropriate dwelling units including slums and squatter settlements. Out of a total of 150,000 housing units required annually in urban areas, only an estimated 35,000 (23 %) of the demand is met. This is attributed to underinvestment in low and middle-cost housing by both the public and private sectors. In the urban areas, overcrowding, lack of adequate sanitation and pollution characterize urban slums posing

serious health risks to residents. Unplanned informal settlements, on the other hand, pose a serious challenge to the socio-economic development of the country. As a result, therefore, Bird, Montebruno and Regan (2017) claim that cities and towns need to adjust to address the housing needs of these residents, and if formal housing is underprovided they risk many more people ending up in the slums. To put the slum phenomena into context, it is estimated that 850 million people live in an informal urban settlement worldwide (Sticzay and Koch, 2015) although this is a slight reduction from 924 million people estimated by the UN-Habitat (2003). The World Bank (2008) argue that it is possible that lack of a precise definition of the concept 'slum' may have contributed to the lack of cohesive, effective and tailored policy response leading to a rather bleak outlook of slums situation in Kenya. Similarly, the UN-Habitat (2003) claims that Kenya lacks a clear policy that would to facilitate and guide urban development with most existing urban interventions largely made on an ad hoc basis. Apparently, most Kenyan slums are located on unplanned sites that are unsuitable for housing thereby exposing their residents to different forms of pollution.

UN-Habitat (2003) further posits that there have been joint efforts by the government, donors and NGOs in some slums involving housing and infrastructure programmes. However, these efforts have been said to have had mixed results even though some policy sensitive initiatives have sought to address themes such as settlement upgrading, community participation and improved access to services. As a result, there has been an increase in housing stock and expanded community opportunities and participation. Nevertheless, such initiatives have not curbed proliferation of new slums, exclusion of groups and gentrification. Indeed, there is seemingly a disconnect between the slum problem and the policy and action strategies used by both the state and NGOs.

According to UN-Habitat (2015) estimates reveal that the population living in slums in the developing world decreased from 46.2 per cent in 1990, 39.4 per cent in 2000, to 32.6 per cent in 2010 and to 29.7 per cent in 2014 (UN-Habitat, 2015). Despite this reductionist trend, developing countries have shown a steady increase in slum dwellers from 689 million in 1990, 791 million in 2000 to 880 million in 2014 (UN-Habitat, 2015). UN-Habitat (2015) estimates that slum population will increase to 1.2 billion of Africa's urban population by 2050. Mahabir et.al (2016) points out that the major factors influencing growth of slums include locational aspects such as social ties, culture and language, rural-urban migration

coupled with poor urban governance and ineffective policies have been cited as major drivers for growth of slums.

According to Gulyana and Basset (2010), the living conditions diamond is a framework which could help understand the phenomena of the slum. Using four components of the framework i.e. tenure, infrastructure, housing unit quality and neighborhood and location, they assert that these elements that need to be focused on when addressing slum issues. They define tenure as the right of an individual to hold something (land, a structure); infrastructure as services that are determinants of living conditions because they are required to make settlements and housing functional. These include roads, drains, water mains, and electrical lines and the provision of public services such as potable water supply, electricity, solid waste collection, and public transportation; housing unit quality refers to an appropriately designed, built, and adequately maintained house for shelter and neighborhood and lastly location refers to settlement's geographical position, quality, and amenities which crucially influence the overall quality of living conditions. Gulyana and Basset (2010) point out that these elements of the framework are interwoven and more interlinked to each other than independent. Besides, they assert that the framework has to take into consideration various dynamics of a specific place, so the details can change, and it cannot be generalized. However, the diamond can be used to facilitate analyses of issues such as upgrading and revitalization besides helping to make the discussion regarding 'entry points' and interventions both more explicit and structured. UN Habitat, (2016) contends that promotion and provision of universal access to basic services should therefore inform and lead formation and implementation of the new urban agenda.

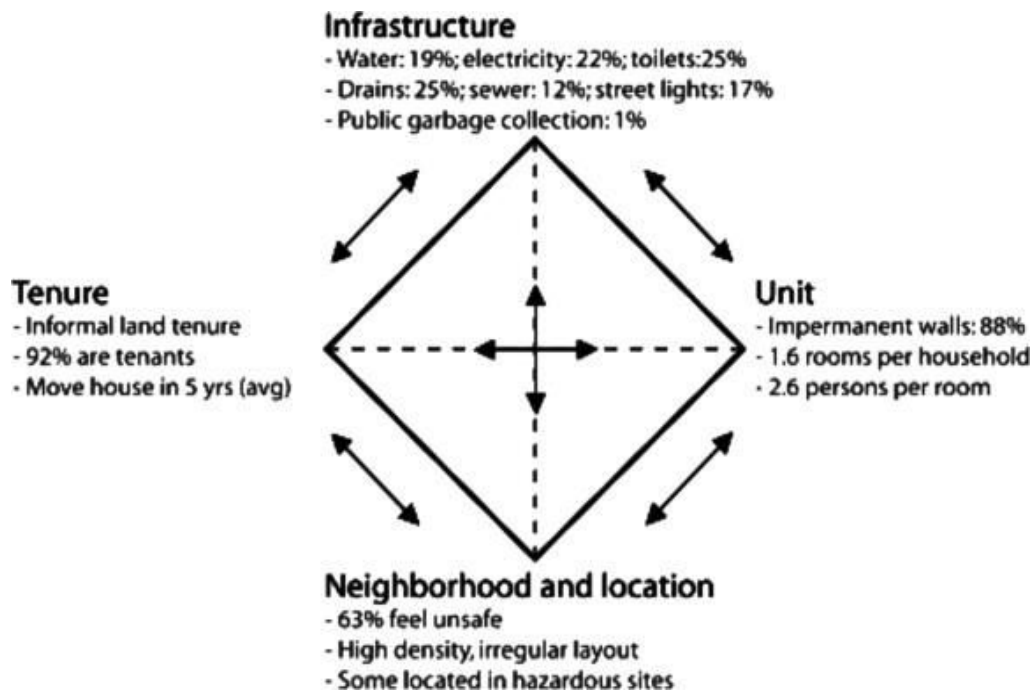


Figure 2: Living conditions diamond for Nairobi. (Gulyana and Basset, 2010)

## 2.5 The rise of NGOs and their frame conditions in Kenya

According to Willets (2011), around 1910, one hundred and thirty-two organisations joined together and decided to cooperate with each other under the label “the Union of International Associations”. Besides, the League of Nations officially referred NGOs to as “private organisations” while many organisations at the time referred to themselves as international institutes, international unions or simply international organizations (Willets, 2011). It is however in the 90s that NGOs raised their profiles and got recognised as important actors in the development arena (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

According to Kameri-Mbote (2000) the roots of NGOs in Kenya may be traced to philanthropy during colonial times where religious based organisations such as Young Men Christian Associations (YMCA) and the Young Women Christian Associations (YWCA) focused on provision of social services such as healthcare and education. The legal definition of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) as stated in section 2 of the Kenyan NGO Act (2012) defines them as private voluntary grouping of individuals, not operated for profit or for other commercial purposes, but which have organized themselves nationally or internationally for the benefit of the public at large and for the promotion of social welfare, development charity or research in the areas inclusive of, but not restricted to, health, relief, agriculture, education, industry and the supply of amenities and services. In Kenya, despite

their different orientations, NGOs are usually lumped together under the umbrella of non-governmental organisations which include women groups, inter-governmental organizations, associations, trade unions, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and others (Kameri-Mbote, 2000). Lewis and Kanji (2009) argue that a commonly disregarded element of NGOs is their diversity because of ability to take on different forms and roles within development which makes it difficult to understand the phenomena they represent. For instance, some NGOs are international while others are local, some are faith based while others are secular, some are charitable and tokenistic while others are radical, and advocacy based.

Hearn (2007), contend that Africa has witnessed an astounding growth in the number and influence of NGOs in the last 25 years. In Kenya for instance, the number grew from 267 registered NGOs in 1988 to 2,511 registered NGOs by 2003. Similarly, (Brass 2011) assert that Kenya experienced a rapid increase in registered NGOs from 400 in 1990 to over 6,000 in 2008. Besides, an article in the Daily Nation indicate that Kenya had 9,728 registered NGOs by 2014 although only 7,258 were active where majority engaged in in education, health and relief services (Karanja and Kilonzo, 2015). More recently, an article by Standard Digital quoted Mohamed Fazul the outgoing Chair of the NGO Coordination Board stating that they had registered 15,000 NGOs in Kenya (Musau, 2018). According to Brass (2012), most NGOs in Kenya, regardless of where they were established are funded via international sources. For instance, 35% of NGOs received all their funding from abroad, 50% received 95% or more of their funding from international sources, while organizations that receive a mix of local and international funds get 71% of their funds from abroad on average. Similarly, the Daily Nation online editions reports that NGOs in Kenya are largely funded by international donors with only 18 Billion Ksh of funding accessed locally while 100 Billion coming from international donors (Karanja and Kilonzo, 2015). With the purpose to control NGO funding, the government through NGO coordination board deregistered 15 NGOs for allegedly funding terrorism activities amidst claims that over 6 Billion Ksh of donor funds came from undisclosed sources (Karanja and Kilonzo, 2015). Similarly, statistics from the Republic of Kenya (2006), states that 35% of NGOs received all their funding from abroad, 50% received 95% or more of their funding from international sources, while organizations that receive a mix of local and international funds get 71% of their funds from abroad averagely. The Daily Nation article further highlighted that 510 more charitable organizations

have been deregistered for failing to file audited financial reports as required by law (Karanja and Kilonzo, 2015).

The NGO Coordination Board has seemingly prioritized regulation of NGOs with warnings regarding misappropriation, embezzlement and diversion of donor funds, money laundering and terrorism financing. A look at the Kenyan NGO coordination board website reveals its focus on exerting authority over NGOs. Some of the roles highlighted include: advising the government on the activities of the NGOs and their role in national development, providing policy guidelines to the NGOs for harmonizing their activities to the National Development Plan for Kenya and maintaining the register of national and international NGOs operating in Kenya, with the precise sectors, affiliations and locations of their activities and developing and publishing a code of conduct for the regulation of NGOs and their activities in Kenya. According to (Kameri-Mbote, 2000 and Radley, 2008), in December 1990 the Kenyan government introduced the NGO coordination bill which sought to monitor and control NGOs due to a perceived threat to government legitimacy resulting from their immense development resources and efforts in pressing for civil liberties, human rights, and environmental protection. For example, the Green Belt Movement founded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai was threatened for its role in pro-democracy activities and was deregistered for some time in 1999 while CLARION was similarly deregistered in 1995 for seemingly political reasons. Apparently, former President Moi had grown increasingly concerned that “NGOs were using donor funds to contest state legitimacy through delivery of services” (Kanyinga, 1996 pg. 82) and this threatened the government in thinking that NGOs were becoming a strong independent political force with influential political clout that undermined government’s image. In an article published by the Standard digital on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018, the outgoing chair of NGO coordination board Mr, Fazul was asked why the board was targeting NGOs dealing with governance and human rights issues and replied,

*“Look, of the 15,000 NGOs we have registered and by the way we had 9,000 when I came in, how many have I targeted, and have you heard any from health or education sector complaining? We can count with you. They are just about six.... the rest are stuck in the past. Forget me; they are suffering even a bigger existential threat; the epic donor shift from governance to core sectors that impact on the people - health, education, and agriculture.” (Musau, 2018).*



Lewis and Kanji (2009) assert that by demonstrating or advocating for alternative vision of development NGOs implicitly or explicitly challenges the state. This is turn viewed as threatening to the state's legitimacy when its inability to deliver services questioned and exposed. Nevertheless, Kenya has since developed legal instruments to protect the work of NGOs. Provisions on the freedoms of speech, assembly and association are entrenched under the NGO Co-ordination Act Chapter 134 (Kenyan NGO Act, 2012) of the Kenyan constitution. Of significance is Section 80, which provides for the protection of the freedom of association and assembly. Under this section, every person is guaranteed the right to assemble freely and associate with other persons. This includes the right to form or belong to associations.

## **2.6 NGOs programmes and Activities within Slums**

This section review literature on programmes and nature of NGO programmes and how they focus on child poverty. NGOs are increasingly becoming recognized as alternative and legitimate development institutions to central government programs and projects (Liebenberg, 2009). Indeed, they have been regarded by scholars as the third most important sector in the economies of developing nations because of their massive contributions to socio-economic and political development in poor countries. Within poverty reduction, NGOs are said to play four crucial roles of encouraging participation of the poorest through their access to the most neglected sections by the state, provision of service to the poor and the disadvantaged in an economical way without seeking for returns (Hossain, 2001), besides NGOs are more likely to achieve their objectives compared to state led programmes (Liebenberg, 2009) and lastly NGOs operate in the grassroots where it easy to create rapport and gain trust from communities which is significant in setting development priorities (Hossain, 2001).

Brass (2011) asserts that NGOs have experienced a remarkable shift in their organizational character and work since they have adopted technical and managerial solutions to social issues such as poverty through service delivery and welfare provision. Barr, Fafchamps and Owens (2005) assert that while there exists substantial literature on the work on NGOs globally, there seems to be little survey-based research on NGOs in developing countries especially in Africa. The existing literature clearly outlines many different roles that NGOs play within society. For instance, NGOs are crucial components of the society based on their roles as providers of services, catalysts of social capital and advocates for vulnerable groups.

In an analysis of NGOs work in Kenya, Brass (2012) outlines that 90% of registered NGOs are involved primarily in-service delivery particularly in programmes involving agriculture, education, environment, general development, peace, and governance, health, emergency or refugee relief, and programs directed at disadvantaged communities.

According to Radley (2008), there seem to be predominance of NGOs engagement in issues related to HIV/AIDS and health sectors in Kenya which has been associated with the slow but steady decline in national HIV/AIDS prevalence rates to 5% (UNAIDS, 2007). Other sectors receiving a lot of attention included food, education and water and sanitation respectively. In this light, Human Rights Watch (2003) highlights that there has been considerable success among NGOs, especially their work in providing civic education, shelter and other basic needs, representation in legal proceedings, small-scale lending programs, women-owned housing cooperatives, and advocating for legislative and social change. Forkuor and Agyemang (2018) posit that NGOs in the developing countries commonly involve strategies for improving access and utilization of social services and strategies for human and financial capital development towards improved household productivity and income towards urban poverty reduction. For instance, World Vision initiative in HIV/AIDS intervention through creation awareness and training in Mozambique (Mulenga, 2002) and micro finance loan programme for the poor under Jamii bora initiative in Kenya (Salim, 2010) are examples of the use of the two strategies respectively.

Similarly, in South Africa, a community-driven partnership between social work students at the University of Pretoria (SAVF) and the Mamelodi community, led to a development of a project for the urban poor focusing mainly on income-generating programs and job-creation by investing in talents and interest in activities such as bead-work, cleaning businesses, poultry projects, woodwork, and recycling projects (Lombard et.al, 2012). Moreover, the organization provides training to the local community on business and entrepreneurship skills as well as offering support with marketing for the products aimed at securing income and economic independence of the participants (Lombard et.al, 2012). The project further provides clothing and stationary through a voluntary credit earning initiative in which participants attend homework and group-work sessions where the credit earning arrangement is regarded as the motivation for attending and gaining credits while learning (Lombard et.al, 2012). Based on the credits gained one can make orders for personal items needed from the programme which ultimately protects the participants against dependency for hand-outs.

*“As it is often said, knowledge to the poor is power to the poor [and] illiteracy creates a situation of dependency on others that can limit an individual’s prospects for empowerment” (Cheston and Kuhn, 2002 p. 64).*

The SAVF programme involves other crucial pillars of health and education which are key pillars of human development and greatly anchors the anti-poverty strategies and interventions (Lombard et.al, 2012). Johnson (1999) argue that one of the most effective ways of redressing the gross societal inequalities including children without access to clean water proper sanitation, nutrition, healthcare, or educational facilities is implementation of holistic early childhood development programs. Similarly, UNICEF (2016) asserts that quality education has the power to end intergenerational cycles of inequity, provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life and is associated with increased incomes, reduced poverty and improved health. According to Green (2009) the health of poor people is subject to daily attrition from dirty water, malnourishment, and a lack of basic health services.

## **2.7 Effectiveness of NGO programmes in alleviating child poverty**

The ability to connect with beneficiaries and their role as innovators in working with the poor greatly boosted the profile of NGOs within development (Barr, Fafchamps, & Owens, 2005, Hearn, 2007 and Banks, Hulme and Edwards, 2015). They further contend that NGOs are desirable for their push to pursue participatory and people centered forms of development as well as filling gaps left by the failure of states particularly in the developing countries. For instance, according to Evans, Kremer and Ngatia (2004), an NGO named ICS-Africa operates a child sponsorship program (CSP) in Western Kenya, in which children sponsored by donors from the Netherlands receive school fees and school uniforms. The evaluation results of this programme revealed a positive impact on school participation where access to school uniform contributed to reduction of absenteeism (Evans, Kremer and Ngatia, 2004). Nega and Schneider (2014) and Ellis and Freeman (2004) assert that NGOs fill in the gaps where the state is too weak to provide public services effectively, save and improve the quality of life of the community facing famines, HIV-AIDS attrition and those living in slums. However, while NGOs are well-intentioned entities that often improve the lives of people and receive enormous funding, they are yet to achieve structural transformation necessary for real economic development and therefore proven to be no substitute for the state. In a similar view, Banks, Edward and Hulme (2015) argue that some sections of NGOs are increasingly

vocal about the problems they face in contributing to progressive social change given the constraints that are placed on them by current patterns of politics and foreign aid and even NGOs questioned their impact albeit behind closed doors.

Despite their relative success, NGOs have faced questions particularly regarding the strategies incorporated in achieving their objectives some of which have been labelled as insensitive (Amutabi, 2006; Hearn 2007). For instance, despite becoming the lead donor and the single largest source of financial and technical support to the Kenya national health care financing program, Hearn (2007) criticizes USAID's involvement in Kenyan healthcare. She claims that its involvement led to significantly reduced state involvement in provision of health care and contributed to the enactment of policies which led to the introduction of user-fees leading to massive inaccessibility of healthcare amongst the poorest Kenyans. Wright (2012) argues that the shift towards NGO led provision of services is significantly displacing government in developing countries instead of facilitating the states in building institutional capacity. Similarly, Edward and Hulme (1996) claim that if government ministries were accorded similar funding to NGOs, they could effectively provide services such as health and education. This claim however disregards the social-economic and political conditions under which these governments operate and if indeed there exists political and economic goodwill to ensure the objectives are achieved. Even then it is apparent that increasing private provision by NGOs directly undermines the efforts to strengthen state provision.

It is also conceivable that the presence of NGOs tends to reconfigure the existing relationship between citizens and the state by weakening the social responsibility of the state to the citizens thereby facilitating the re-establishment of a new social contract between NGOs, private provider and the beneficiaries. This is termed as the emergence of franchise states whereby the state is no longer accountable to its citizens as it no longer provides services to them but plays a minimal oversight role in various sectors (Woods, 1997). In Haiti for instance, aid organizations provides 80% of basic services (Wright, 2012). It is evident therefore that there are many lenses on which NGOs are evaluated. If NGOs are effective or not is difficult to tell because of complex factors and frame conditions in which they operate.

Brinkerhoff (2007) points out that sometimes NGOs opt to adopt measurable goals in choice of projects at the expense of a more holistic approach, particularly if their initial stated goal such as empowerment becomes challenging to measure. Additionally, donors tend to prefer

specific projects rather than supporting long term operations and this influences the entire configuration of projects. Despite the commendable work, there is strong skepticism over NGOs' capability of reducing poverty. Chant and McIlwaine (2009) argue that although NGOs save lives and empower communities, their efforts are not deemed enough in the long term. Doubts on NGOs work are further based on concerns about their close relationship and high dependency on donors despite their closer proximity to the poor. Banks, Hulme and Edwards (2015 pg. 715) purport that the unequal position in the international aid chain means that NGOs have become "*too close to the powerful, and too far from the powerless*" where they risk being pulled further away from their intended beneficiaries by aligning more closely with governments. Consequently, NGOs continue to face significant difficulties tailoring programmes to local needs and realities and instead operate within incentivized and competitive donor-driven funding environment to formulate their strategies and policies in line with donor priorities and interests (Edwards, 2008). In this light, NGOs are perceived as being too donor dependent thereby raising questions about the long-term sustainability of their activities as donors impose demands that limit the possibilities for NGOs to work in the interests of the poorest communities (Nyamu-Musembi and Musyoki, 2004).

Besides, current discourses range on whether NGOs should shift from conceptualizing development as community empowerment/leverage rather than as service delivery. Brass (2011) claim that 90% of registered NGOs in Kenya focus primarily on service delivery. They offer a wide range of interventions including health and education services to emergency response, democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights, finance and many more. Lewis and Kanji, (2009) argue that the need to meet previously unmet needs and contractual arrangements with a state/donor are some motivations that cause NGOs to provide services. However, some NGOs seek to tackle poverty through indirect means such as training other NGOs, government and private sector, or through research (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). While there has been a huge push for NGOs towards service delivery they have been hampered by quality control, limited sustainability and poor coordination among others. Strong ties on service provision have equally led to concerns on the quality of delivery, their changing relationship with beneficiaries and questions on whether they replace the state. However, a key dilemma for NGOs is whether service deliver is a means to meet people's immediate needs and bridging the gap until state led provision mechanism are put in place or whether it is an end in itself where NGOs are expected to deliver services as a long-term

policy (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). Indeed, David and Hulme (2012) assert that there is concern that NGOs tend to operate outside the political arena and are seemingly unable to participate or contribute in dealing with the more structural causes and manifestations of poverty such as social and political exclusion. While they are widely acknowledged as service providers they are not much known in their role as democratizers of development (Bebbington, 2005) because it is still not clearly articulated how NGOs should participate in the political process to achieve this (Edwards and Hulme 1996). Consequently, this depoliticizes poverty and conceptualizes it only as a technical problem that can be 'solved' by technical means via provision.

## **2.8 NGOs as partners or competitors to the state**

With the evolving aid architecture in which NGOs predominantly rely on heavily on donor funding, their relationship with the state, beneficiaries and donors is increasingly becoming reconfigured. NGOs have therefore tended to increasingly disregard their relationship with beneficiaries as their source of legitimacy and pushing closer towards operational efficiency and policy influence and in response to donor requirements (Kilby, 2006). It is arguable that there is distortion on to whom NGOs are accountable to. Edwards, Michael and Hulme (2015) question whether NGOs are answerable either to their partners, host governments, beneficiaries or staff. Even though, Lewis and Kanji (2009) admit that accountability is a complex issue for NGOs who have multiple constituencies and are needed to account in different ways to different groups with different interests. Wright (2012) however contends that NGO's main accountability is or should be, to the beneficiaries i.e. the people whose lives their activities affect irrespective of whether funding is from the state or overseas donors. It is however not the case as political leaders and western donors wield unquestionable power which ultimately sways the accountability away from the people NGOs aim to help to the donors who demand to see concrete results.

The relationship between NGOs and the state is not universal and is not easy to define due to its complexity. Rosenberg et al (2008) assert that it can range from overt and hidden tensions and from active hostility to cooperation and collaboration depending on multiple influences such as successive government regimes and their dispositions and changing NGO strategies and interventions. Nega and Schneider (2014) argue that criticism meted on NGOs is based on the belief that they are stumbling blocks to the much-needed capacity building of the state

in the long run. Key questions that arise include whether NGO led programmes are comparable to state led programmes and whether NGOs model of using tailor made interventions for narrowly targeted beneficiaries within a specific community, can equally be replicated to societal problems at regional or national level since slum phenomenon is a structural issue emanating from many intertwined state and community factors (Nega and Schneider, 2014). According to Semboja and Therkildsen (1995), NGOs in Kenya greatly depend on external support from the state and from foreign NGOs and/or donors. Even then their links to the state are becoming more important for service provision rather than less important. Incidentally, Edwards (1996) contend that the success of an NGO is directly connected with having a clear and shared vision of what the NGO wants to achieve and having strong linkages between grassroot organizations and government. Forkuor and Agyemang (2018) and Bukenya and Hickey (2014) posit that NGOs are considered development partners to the state since they are widely acknowledged to provide alternative solutions to the community where the state is unable to. For instance, health, education, water and sanitation are key sectors within which NGOs help governments to implement and realize their programs. The scope of collaboration between NGOs and the state is expanding to include partnership in policy making processes. Brass (2012) asserts that the Kenyan government and NGOs have a streamlined relationship in which the

*“NGOs now sit on government policymaking boards, development committees, and stakeholder forums; their strategies and policies are integrated into national planning documents; and their methods of decision making have, over time, become embedded in government’s own and that NGOs have become institutionalized in the governing processes of public service provision,” (Brass, 2012, pg. 218).*

Brass (2011) assert that increased partnership between the state and NGOs has resulted in increased transparency, accountability, and participation within public administration which represents blurred boundaries between the two players in which they there is back and forth in engagement. This models the Gramscian thinking that represents the struggle between hegemonic and counterhegemonic forces towards building inclusive public spheres (Bukenya and Hickey, 2014). Banks and Hulme (2012) contend that the emergence and proliferation of NGOs in developing countries is greatly determined by prevailing institutional arrangements and as a result, relations between governments and NGOs vary considerably from country to country and are diverse and complex in nature. In south Asia for instance, Nair (2011) points

out that a mixture of sociopolitical environments, NGO activities, donor presence and agendas, and global policies and pressures have influenced government-NGO relationships to varying degrees in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Contrastingly, emergence of NGOs in Africa was influenced by the history of active associational life in which indigenous membership-based organizations have long played a role in community life and development (Hearn, 2007). Besides, it is argued that political influences have a strong impact on NGOs in Africa, with NGOs joining the patronage networks of political leaders (Brass, 2012). Liebenberg (2009) argue that most governments often monitor the operations of the NGOs to ascertain what type of the relationship exists between them. This could be complementary, opposition, or reformation and how the NGOs perceive the state. The process of monitoring however creates conflicts and suspicion on both sides which tends out to become a huge challenge in the state-NGO relationship. In Uganda, for instance the NGO sector is viewed with mixed feelings, including rampant suspicion that the public good is not the primary motivation fueling NGOs (Barr et al, 2005). State monitoring is however important if conducted in non-restrictive manner where they seek to support the NGOs in legalizing their activities as well as synchronizing their operations with those of other NGOs as well as the state to achieve the common agenda of fighting poverty.

## **2.9 Challenges facing NGOs**

Porter (2003) contends that one key challenge to local based NGOs in the poorest countries is the need to get partners (usually from west) since this opens channels for much needed funding. The competition for external funding among local NGOs is said to reveal the dark side of NGO funding in the global south, with claims of intellectual theft, and corruption to have projects accepted among the negative element outlined. Moreover, high levels of joblessness within public and private sector have made NGOs to seem as alternative employment opportunities for professionals both field workers and management positions at the regional and national headquarters of major NGOs (Forkuor and Agyemang, 2018). The view of NGOs as competitors rather than partners and stakeholders within the same sector, greatly undermines their objectives as well as the wider community aspirations for those whom they are meant to serve. Nega and Shneider (2014) purport that one key weakness within NGOs relates to their size, since most are generally small consequently have very limited institutional capacity, while this is equally strength, they are questioned in terms of how much reach they have. Similarly, another institutional weakness of NGOs is on their



sustainability, Nega and Schneider (2014) contend that NGOs tend to operate in periodic cycles such that once the project period is complete, an NGO must find another project financier to remain operational.

Barr et.al (2005) asserts that NGOs find it difficult to report actual information and rather seek to provide information that can impress and create a good image to the recipient. They site their research in Uganda involving 100 NGOs where they concluded that respondents provided the information they thought the researchers were interested in, rather than what NGOs were doing. Moreover, they point out that only a minority of the surveyed NGOs could supply consistent revenue and expenditure figures when requested. Additionally, most NGOs claimed to involve beneficiary communities in the design and evaluation of their programmes although the findings from beneficiaries indicated that community participation either before or after was sought in less than 60% of NGOs (Barr & Fafchamps, 2003). It is also notable that while most claimed to have organized and accessible financial record and budget, most tended to struggle to provide consistent revenue and expenditure figures. 1/3<sup>rd</sup> declined to give access to their financial records or supplied revenue and expenditure figures that were internally inconsistent. Nevertheless, 62% gave figures that nearly matched their set budgets. There is therefore need for caution with data and information accessed from NGOs and highlights the importance of finding means for counter verification if possible. Moreover, there remain questions on the general understanding and involvement of NGOs in the larger sociopolitical and economic milieu in which they operate since this can easily compromise progress or effectiveness of an organization both locally and nationally. Unlike other traditional forms of civil society organizations such as trade unions, religious organisations and social political movements generally referred to as Membership Based Organizations who have political power gained from the people they represent, NGOs have none of it and therefore need to focus on working closely with MBOs towards consolidating the political voice they lack to influence policy (Banks, Hulme and Edwards, 2015). There is need therefore, to focus on developing inclusive political, economic institutions within the state that facilitate broad-based and long-term development (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012).

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Location of the research study

Kenya is an expansive country, made up of 47 counties with 43 ethnic communities with an approximate 43 million people (KNBS, 2014). This study was carried out in Meru County in central highlands of Kenya. Meru County is predominantly inhabited by the Ameru people who speak Kimeru language and has nine sub tribes (Meru County Government, 2013). The projected population of the county was 1.6 million people consisting of 725, 000 children by 2017 (Meru County Government, 2013). The county headquarters are based in Meru town which is a sprawling urban and semi-urban settings inhabited by projected estimate of 135,840 in 2017 while the growth has been facilitated by the increased rural populations, narrowing of land resources and increase in educated but jobless youth in search of white collar jobs (Meru County Government, 2013). In terms of infrastructure and social amenities the larger Meru County has 792 Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD), 647 primary schools and 192 secondary schools and two universities. Moreover, the county is characterized by inadequate, unaffordable and indecent housing, particularly for low income earners in urban areas (Meru County Government, 2013). This can be explained by the fact that Meru town is surrounded by five informal settlements (slums). Meru County had a total of twenty-six NGOs operating in areas such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, emergency care and child and women abuse. I choose Meru town firstly because I have contextual understanding of the town having worked for a church-based organisation earlier in life but importantly was the recognition of the problem of child poverty in communities living in the slums of Meru town whom considerably depend on NGOs activities (Meru County Government, 2013).



Figure 3.1: Maps Showing Location of Meru County (in red)

### 3.2 Research design

Methodologically, this study employed qualitative method in a case study design and used majorly used primary data and secondary data as supplementary information. Primary data refers to the items that are original to the study at hand while secondary data refers to items that are not originally connected to the study at hand but where the researcher obtains from other people/sources and used in the absence of primary data or to supplement the primary data (Cohen et.al, 2007). The secondary sources used in this study include government policy documents and newspaper articles with content related to NGOs and child poverty. I chose to use a case study design because of its potential to illustrate and “understand complex social phenomena” (Yin 2009, pg. 4). Moreover, Yin (2012) asserts that case studies are useful when researchers study descriptive or explanatory questions. According to Creswell (2007), case study method is a relevant qualitative approach for researchers with identifiable cases seeking to provide in-depth understanding or comparison of the cases. In this study, I aimed at getting in-depth understanding of NGOs’ programmes combating child poverty in the slums of Meru town, Kenya. A qualitative approach offers a researcher the opportunity to get insight into the why`s and how`s, regarding a specific research topic while at the same time enabling the researcher to analyse the data inductively to discover meanings and analyses (Bryman, 2008). In the context of this thesis, I assessed the Kenyan policy and the

operational frame conditions for NGOs working in the slums. Besides, I investigated the activities and programmes NGOs operate in combating child poverty and lastly explored the perspectives of participant on the effectiveness of NGOs in combating child poverty in the slums. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, pg. 3) assert that qualitative research is an activity in which the researcher is the observer of the world in a process that involves interpretation and material practices that make the world visible. These practices therefore turn the world into a series of representations made up of fieldnotes, conversations, interviews, photographs. I chose qualitative research because it was relevant for studying NGOs and enabling to collect data from beneficiaries in the slums. In this regard, I was able to interpret phenomena based on the original meanings that people bring to the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

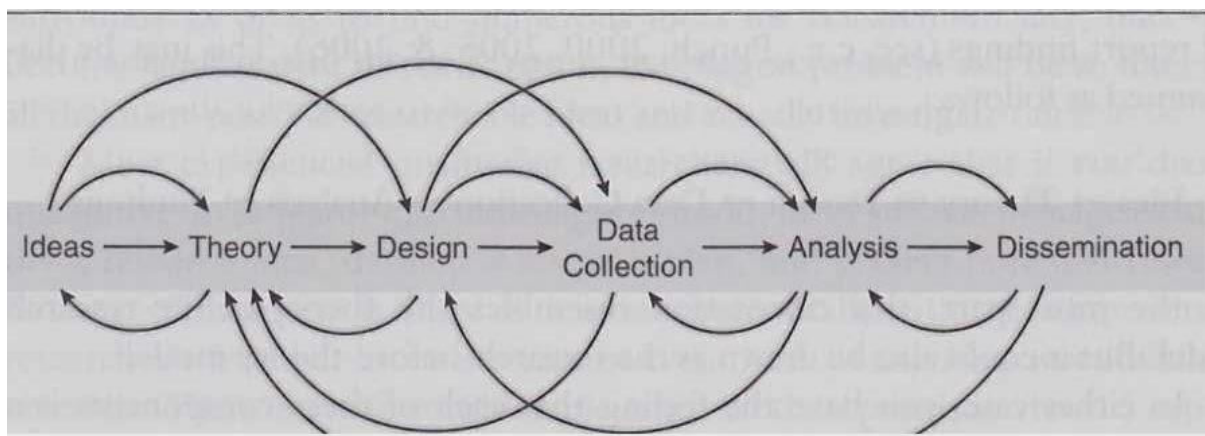


Figure 3.2: The Spiraling Research Approach (Berg & Lune 2012)

### 3.3 Sampling

I used non-probability sampling for this study specifically purposeful and snow balling sampling methods. Cohen et.al (2007) argue that in non-probability sampling, the researcher targets a group in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population but only represents itself. While purposive and snow balling are very similar techniques of non-probability sampling where the researcher hand picks the participants based on their possession of the specific characteristics needed for the study, snowballing slightly differs in the sense that the researcher only picks a few individuals who are used as informants to help the access the network of other individuals who qualify for inclusion into the sample (Cohen et.al, 2007). I chose snowballing because of the confidential nature of identifying NGO beneficiaries since it was difficult to get access as their identities regarded as classified information. Bryman, (2008) and Check and Schutt (2012) asserts that snow balling is

effective where a researcher has difficulties in developing a sampling frame for the population. Through snow-balling technique I identified five opinion-leaders among the parents/guardians who in turn introduced me to other 35 beneficiaries resulting in 40 beneficiary participants for this study. Purposeful sampling was used to get the six NGO representatives and 2 county government officials who were key informants in this study. Creswell (2012) argue that in qualitative studies participants and research sites can be identified via purposeful sampling based on places and people that can best help the researcher understand the central phenomenon based on the belief that the participants will be information rich.

During this study, a total of 40 parents/guardians were sampled to participate in oral semi-structured interviews. The criterion for selection of the parents or guardians was that they live in a slum within Meru town and that their household or children benefited from an NGO programme. Out of the 40-sampled parent/guardians only 3 were men while 39 were women. The age of the participant provided a range from young parents to middle age to very elderly people who were grandparents. Majority of the participants had no jobs while a few did lowly paid manual jobs such as cleaning and construction while others had small scale businesses selling vegetables and cooked food. For the key informants, six NGO representatives and two government officials were selected as participants. NGOs were selected on the basis that they operated a programme benefiting slum households or children within Meru town. Besides, only people with management or administrative positions were considered for this study. This is because I believed the study would get detailed and rich data for this study. The two government officials were selected based on the relevance of their offices to NGOs and slum communities. Firstly, I sampled the sub-county children's officer who works closely with NGOs. Besides, I sampled an officer in the county's social services department which oversee the implementation of the government cash-transfer programme for the vulnerable and co-ordinates and work closely with NGOs in the county.

### **3.4 Data collection approach**

I firstly did piloting of the interview questions with a small sample of four participants before embarking on the actual data collection. During the piloting, it emerged that some participants among the parents/guardians particularly the elderly had difficulties comprehending the questions despite having them translated in Kimeru the ethnic language

spoken in Meru County. This helped me in revisiting the questions and reviewing them further. Piloting also enabled me to purposefully sample participants who seemed better at comprehending the questions as this increased the probability of getting the interview questions answered. According to Bryman (2012) it is a common practice in research to test the suitability of the interview questions, check the length of the interview and improve the questions if necessary. After the piloting, I proceeded with semi structured oral interviews for all the 48 participants i.e. the parents/guardians, county officials and NGO representatives in which I scheduled appointments in their work places for the NGO and government officials and homes in the slums for beneficiary participants. However, a few interviews were carried out in restaurants in Meru town since the participants were not at home at the scheduled time.

During the interviews, I had a list of pre-set questions prepared in advance for use during data collection. I chose semi-structured interviews for data collection because it gave me the opportunity to ask questions in addition to probing deeper on important aspects of the study highlighted by the participants. Bryman (2008), purports that semi-structured interviews normally follow a prescribed interview guide containing a list of questions to be asked to the participants but also offer opportunity for the researcher to probe. Indeed, choosing semi-structured interviewing method offered an advantage for flexibility while conducting the interview as well as opportunity to be as detailed as possible with the participant. Bryman (2008) asserts that qualitative interviewing tends to be flexible and more importantly provides room for the researcher to take into consideration how the interviewee understands issues and events, meaning the research is greatly influenced by what the participant deems important. During my study I had incidents where participants diverged from the research questions asked and I gave them more time to engage on their specific issues of interest by changing the order of questions during the interview. Bryman (2008) states that during interviews questions may not follow each other as listed in the question guide as new questions emerge during the interview process. Denscombe (2010) argue that conducting one on one interviews offers an opportunity for in-depth probing where clarity is needed or to find out more information from the informants. For use in interviews I had a pre-designed interview guide in which I ensured that the questions in the interview guide were not leading toward certain answers but ensured that they captured the answers needed by the research questions (Bryman, 2008).

During the actual interviews most of the parents/guardians were available in the mornings and late evenings particularly those from slum A and slum B due to involvement in informal businesses and jobs. The interviews for the NGO representatives were less stressful to schedule since it was possible to book appointments with them and visit them at their work offices. It was however challenging for some to find conducive time for interviews due to hectic work where a few interviews had to be conducted late after office hours. The interviews for government officials were conducted during day time although it was extremely challenging to find ample time for both interviews with many failed appointments and they were quite rushed when they did happen. It was apparent that this was not very exciting for the officials as they seemed less enthusiastic. During the interviews I did not have special interview equipment as I would have incurred expenses to hire them. However, I had two smart phones which I used for recording all the interviews. Moreover, I opted to write down all the responses during interviews as back up for the recorded interviews. Besides, some interviews were done in very noisy places especially in the slums where many people seemed intoxicated by use of local alcoholic brews. I had to interview others by the roadside with cars passing by as they were unavailable any other times. Some interviews I conducted within the slums were disrupted by noisy drunkards as they went around buying the cheap liquor “changaa” most common in Kenyan slums. However, interviews with NGO officials and county officials were done in an orderly and a good environment. The research was carried out in the month of January, typically a very busy month in the Kenyan school calendar where parents are taking their children back to school. Similarly, NGOs were busy rolling out their school support programmes that some scheduled appointments were postponed. While I had a planned interview schedule for all participants, the plan did not work, and I had to resort to interviewing on availability basis. This caused unpredictability for the research process as I had to conclude in time before my departure back to Norway.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

According to Cohen et.al (2007), qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data and in general making sense of data in terms of the participants definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories, regularities and even irregularities. During the analysis of the data, the audio-recorded interviews and the handwritten notes were analyzed to develop themes, categories and possible patterns. Cohen et.al (2007, pg. 480) asserts that when handling qualitative data, there is no one single correct

way of analyzing or presenting the data and how one does it should be determined by “fitness for purpose”. In this study, I used my analysis to locate themes connecting to the research questions as well as possible commonalities, differences and similarities (Cohen, 2007) from the data. To achieve this, I developed an analytical framework for this study using the relevant theory and the findings. The framework included the following subheadings: Definition of poverty, Kenyan policy and frame conditions for NGOs, definition of an NGO according to the Kenyan government, policy frame conditions as regard operations of NGOs in Kenya, government and NGO policy in the slums, NGOs as a potential threat to the government, relationship and joint programs between state and NGOs, NGO Programmes & activities in slums, educational programmes, health programmes, cash transfers and microfinance programmes, effectiveness of NGO Programmes, expectations on NGOs, NGO model or another model?, individual targeting vs holistic approach, accountability of NGOs, service providing vs Democratization roles of NGOs, NGOs and dependency syndrome, NGO programmes and gender, and challenges facing NGO programmes in the slums.

### **3.6 Quality of research**

It remains debatable within research on the relevance of reliability and validity in qualitative research (Bryman, 2008), however validity remains one of the most crucial criterion of research as it entails integrity of the conclusions generated from a piece of research (Bryman, 2012). Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that it is necessary to specify terms and ways of establishing and assessing quality of qualitative research as a way of providing alternative to validity and reliability. In this study, I chose to adhere to the concept of trustworthiness particularly aspects of credibility, authenticity, dependability, confirmability and transferability as parallel criteria to the reliability and validity quantitative studies. In ensuring credibility I sought to ensure that this study was carried out according to prescribed tenets of good practice in research. Bryman (2008) assert that since there exist different possible accounts of social phenomena, it is the credibility of the account that a researcher arrives at, that can determine its acceptability to others. To ascertain authenticity, I ensured that the study involved parent/guardians in NGO programmes within slums, NGO representatives working within slums and county officials whose work connect with NGOs. Simply the sample of this study had experienced the phenomena under research and this ensured that the data was collected from participants who matched the research topic and research questions under study.



To achieve dependability, this study followed the prescribed procedures within scientific research such as keeping records of research proposal, interview guide, field note and transcripts. This is to certify that the study process is verifiable at any given time (Bryman, 2008). On confirmability, the research process was conducted in a way that sought to ensure utmost objectivity. While this is impossible (Bryman, 2008), I ensured that the preparations of the interview schedule, the selection of the slums and participants selected, and the interview process were not overtly influenced by my own theoretical inclinations or personal values and interests. On transferability, while it is impossible to generalize this study unlike in quantitative research, this study sought to give an in-depth and rich account on the context of livelihood within slums in Meru and the role of NGOs in reducing child poverty. Lincoln and Guba (1985), state that a detailed description of a study provides others with a database for making judgements about possible transferability of finding to other contexts.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

According to Bryman (2012) the first element of good ethical research is ensuring that it does not cause harm. The entire research process for this study ensured that all participants were safe both physically and psychologically. Secondly, my research process ensured there was informed consent to all participants. To achieve this, I used the official research confirmation letter signed by my supervisor professor Ruth Haug and used it to introduce my research to the participants. Moreover, before beginning all interviews I ensured that I disclosed what data that would be collected and that participants had a personal choice to participate or withdraw from the study at their own volition. Creswell (2012) asserts that a researcher must submit a request to participants with information about what the study aims at accomplishing, the process undertaken and the roles of both the researcher and participants. I also assured all the respondents of confidentiality both during and after the interview and that the data collected would be used only for the academic purpose of thesis. This is meant to protect them from stress, embarrassment, security threat or unwanted publicity (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the findings of the study, divided in 5 sub-sections. In the context of this thesis, the NGO officials refers to the NGO representative interviewed, government officials are representatives of Meru county and beneficiary participants are the parents/guardians whose households or children benefited from the NGO programmes.

#### 4.1 Understanding of poverty

During the study, I sought to find out from the participants what their understanding or conceptualisation of child poverty is. While they seemed to know and understand what poverty is or entails, they had difficulties telling what exactly it is characterised by some seemingly ambiguous responses from NGO and beneficiary participants. Some of the most common responses seeking to define poverty included; the poor of the poorest, lack of basic needs, those lacking in provision, the needy and vulnerable children. A section of the NGO officials interviewed tended to give broader definitions compared to the beneficiary parents/guardians especially with inclusion of physical and non-physical aspects of deprivation such as emotional, social, physical and economic deprivations.

*“The poor children according to us refer to the needy of the neediest”*

*(NGO official 1)*

*“Poverty is lack of basic needs, shelter, food, clothing, land, work and not able to attend school, being sick or widowed not just children but everyone”. (Beneficiary participant 1)*

*“We normally focus on the vulnerability of the child/children particularly orphans, sick parents, children under care of guardians, single parents and lack of necessities like food and housing” (NGO official 6).*

Most responses were characterised by mentions of lack of food, clothing and tuition fees and work status i.e. whether employed or not while very few mentioned the state of housing, health, water and sewerage or infrastructure. It was evident that the beneficiary participants

tended to view poverty as a personal burden in which they considered themselves are responsible. Contrastingly, the NGO and county government tended to see the bigger picture of the relationship between the social-cultural, economic and political dynamics and slum poverty. However, all participants seemed to include elements of multidimensional poverty in their responses and none referred to poverty in terms of income.

*“I was needy and had problems paying school fees for my children, and still I wasn’t working” (beneficiary participant 15)*

*“Child Poverty is lack of care, poor parenting, lack of money, illiteracy and inhuman conditions” (County Government official 1)*

In summary, poverty is a phenomenon seemingly obvious visible and known to many but defined and understood in diverse ways. This study revealed that people seem to see more of multidimensional aspects rather than the income perspective.

#### **4.2 Kenyan policy and frame conditions for NGOs**

During the fieldwork, I sought to find out the Kenyan policy in relations to NGOs particularly those working in the Meru town. Understanding policy was crucial for this study since it formed the basis of understanding the set principles and guidelines formulated and enforced by the government of Kenya on which NGOs operate. I therefore sought information from NGOs and county government officials. Regarding the Kenyan policy, the NGOs stated that the process of the registration and licencing by NGO Co-ordination Board is convenient with some elaborate guidelines offered. Besides, NGOs are tax exempted in Kenya (those that operate on donor funding and not income generation) which is deemed as an effort towards enabling NGOs to achieve their mandate.

*“We have a very NGO friendly government, both at the central level and within the counties. Besides the state does not tax NGOs which is important since they work to supplement the state” (Government official 2)*

NGOs official pointed out that there weren’t many restrictions and challenges from the state particularly those working with service provision in deprived communities. However, they noted that there have been situations where the government has sought to crack down on NGOs who have questioned the government on crucial issues such as human rights. Those

working in human rights and advocacy were said to be more likely to have tensions and at times legal battles with state institutions such as police and NGO coordination board. But accessing justice was proving an obstacle to NGOs which sought audience with the police and the local administration. The study therefore found that the programme type and dynamics, defined the relationship between the NGOs and state agencies and institutions.

*“Most street children come from the slums and there has been tensions between the state and NGOs working for street children particularly when state organs such as the police have used force to get them out of the streets” (NGO officer 3)*

*“One of the girls in our support programme was sexually molested by the uncle and local chief tried to cover the matter, the girl just delivered and dropped out of school and so far, we have had no legal support to access justice. The police have turned out to be uncooperative” (NGO Official 6)*

On funding support/partnership with the state, all NGOs disclosed that they work with international (Euro-American) donors particularly in funding their programmes and that the government seemed unwilling to partner in programmes financing even though they say NGOs are partners. NGOs also expressed concerns over the Kenyan government’s proposal to introduce capping on international sources of funding, a measure which would weaken them and significantly reduce their development space in Kenya.

*“In the recent years there has been rumors that the state wishes to cap the amount of international funding NGOs receive, in a bid to ensure they do not expand too much” (NGO official, 2)*

*“We are an international NGO with our head office based in Colorado USA, all funding and operation are coordinated from the head office, then country office and local office” (NGO official, 4)*

It is arguable that the Kenyan government recognizes the important role of NGOs within development although it does not offer much support to them apart from registration and regulation. In contrast, NGOs view the government as important partners in slum development. They cited priority issues such as infrastructure, policy and financing of short and long-term slum projects towards poverty eradication as important areas of collaboration. However, there were varied opinions as to whether this was happening. For instance, the

county government willingness to provide land for an NGO to build its infrastructural premises made it choose to operate within the county. Moreover, the area around the town has good road network built by the state as well as security and communication.

*“To us we are not competitors with the state, we get a lot of support from the government particularly with access to land and infrastructure” (NGO official 5).*

*“The government should have a partnership with NGOs, since the state can provide infrastructure, security, water because it’s the role of the state to take care of the people but where they cannot NGOs can help and its important that we continue” (NGO official 3)*

Regarding NGOs relationship with the state, the county government official stated that it is not their mandate to supervise NGOs in Kenya since they operate under the NGO coordination board with its head office in Nairobi and has no local office in Meru. They however emphasized that the state particularly the central government through the ministry of social services views itself as the regulator of NGOs activities in Kenya. In this light, there is a perception amongst NGOs that the state is slowly narrowing down their operational space.

*“NGOs are coordinated and regulated by the NGO co-ordination board in the ministry of devolution and planning within central government of Kenya, however at the county level we inspect the CCIs and have strong links with NGOs in slum programmes. Besides as a county government we are establishing measures to curb rural urban migration which is a main contributor to the expansion of slums in Meru Town” (County officer, 1)*

On the approach to planning and implementation of slum programmes, there were contradicting perspectives between the state and the NGOs. Both seemed to run independent programmes in apparent effort to combat poverty within slums although there was no sign of collaboration whatsoever. The study found that the state is running an independent cash transfer programme dubbed “Inua Jamii” in Swahili which means “lift the community” which targets the most vulnerable families and individuals particularly in informal settlements and poorest rural communities nationally like the cash transfer programmes organized by NGOs 1 and 2 for slum households. It is therefore unknown why such programmes remain

fragmented, yet they are meant to achieve the same results and can be done in a more cost effective and efficient way if done jointly.

*“The state cash transfer programme (Inua Jamii) is better than the NGOs programmes since they provide a one-off cash allocation and subsequent monthly instalment for all orphans and widows while NGOs only support a few and their support is very minimal” (Participant beneficiary 1)*

*“We have a direct cash transfer to the parents with money sent directly from head office in Nairobi although its not much, but a way of supporting the parent especially with school fees payment” (NGO official, 2)*

On funding of programmes in the slums, the NGOs officials were critical of government’s efforts with assertions that the government tends to leave most of financing responsibility to NGOs. Apparently, the state is aware of the existence of western donors and believes NGOs should therefore finance some of the programmes without requiring financial input from the state.

*“The county government considers itself our partners, but they say they need financial support from us since we have international donors. Besides there exists programmes by the county government to support the poor and vulnerable but the government seem uninterested in partnering with us and again there is high level of corruption and structures aren’t well established” (NGO official 1).*

Other crucial stakeholders mentioned by NGO participants included religious organizations, the police, schools and Charitable Children’s Institutions (CCIs). CCIs refer to homes or institutions established by individuals, NGOs, religious organization or corporate entity and granted approval provide care, protection and rehabilitation of children in Kenya. According to one government official, the CCIs within Meru town are very crucial since the county government and NGOs do not have facilities to house deserted or abused children in need of special protection. NGOs therefore work closely with CCIs in situations where there is need for institutional housing for neglected, abused or deserted children from the slums of Meru town.

*“Some of children have parents who are drug addicts and provide nothing towards their wellbeing. We were forced to enroll them into a children’s home since the*

*mother had begun taking them to the pubs and sold the food we provided to get money to drink” (NGO official 6)*

*CCIs in Meru town are working with the county government in developing an efficient structure towards establishing a rescue centre, besides they enroll children in their institutions whom we have nowhere else to take. So, they supplement the government efforts but in no way competing with us. (Government official, 1).*

They highlighted that the police are crucial partner who offer support in ensuring smooth activities in the slums, as well providing security for NGO officers and beneficiaries particularly within the volatile slum environment in Meru town. Nevertheless, they were also said to be a stumbling block in the work of NGOs particularly in investigation and prosecuting cases.

*“We have supportive and friendly working environment. We collaborate with the police and local chiefs because sometimes we have legal issues such as abused children, also the schools seem appreciative of our work” (NGO official 3)*

*“The frame conditions are both enabling and challenging. We currently have a girl child sexually molested by the uncle and the local chief has been compromised and sided with the uncle. Besides we have had other cases in court where we have been coerced to give bribes to get legal support, but we have no money for corruption” (NGO official 6)*

The religious organizations seemed to be very key player in the operations of NGOs in the slums. The slum community within Meru is said to be greatly tied to religion especially Christianity where many churches are visible around the town. NGOs have used these religious groups as a link between themselves and the community, with a few NGOs confessing that they used facilities provided by the church as offices and operational centres. Moreover, some NGOs operating in slum development agenda are founded and funded by the religious organization or affiliated donors. As a result, there is significant influence and engagement within poverty reduction programmes within slums of Meru town. Of the 4 NGOs involved in this study, 3 of them disclosed that they are Christian based organisations with two of them having international operations. The predominance of Christian organization connected with NGOs within Meru town could mean several things. Firstly, that

support and aid to the slum communities is being used as a tool for evangelism by the church. Secondly it is problematic that the church has infiltrated the NGO programmes which make them lose objectivity and neutrality which can be experienced in recruitment and preparing programmes for beneficiaries. For instance, it reveals a form of religious intolerance to have Christian pastors preach to Muslim and atheist children rather than offer programmes that suit their characteristics.

*“We have a weekend programme where we meet all beneficiaries and we have part time teacher with our specially designed curriculum. Our motto is **‘Releasing children from poverty in Jesus’** name with teachings of discipline and love but we don’t select religious affiliation in this” (NGO official 2)*

*“The project staff and committee are selected by the church. The pastor is the project patron and he does preach to the children during meetings, moreover when selecting children, we make announcements to the church” (NGO official 1)*

*“I sit in the project committee as a parent’s representative, but I have not voice, the church has a lot of influence in the committee and decides on the activities and finances. Sometimes project money has been channeled to the church activities” (Beneficiary parent 1)*

In summary, there are two sides regarding the frame conditions on which NGOs in Meru town operate. On one side, there exists a tremendous collaboration between various stakeholders especially the church, NGOs and schools while on the other side, there appears to exist systemic barriers and social issues that impede NGOs work such as uncooperative government institutions and alcoholic parents/guardians. Besides, the relationship between the state and NGOs is seemingly a complex one, characterized by both positive and negative aspects.

#### **4.3 NGO Programmes & activities in slums**

This data was collected from NGOs officials and beneficiary participants where I inquired on what programmes they had in the slums towards combating urban poverty. From the findings of this study, the four NGOs sampled had programmes and activities which were similar and equally dissimilar. While there were many similarities within all the four NGOs, the differences came from the targeting of the NGOs whereby two focused on households to



include the adults living with children while two focused only on children and disregarded the adults. For instance, NGOs 1 and 2 had cash transfers and microfinance programmes focusing towards household support and income generation among adults while NGO 3 and 4 seemed focused on child support programmes such as education sponsorship, feeding programme. Moreover, NGO 1 and 4 seemed to focus on housing especially repairs where needed although this was done on ad hoc basis. Besides, it is notable that all the four NGOs had a focus on healthcare with 1 and 4 enrolling children in the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) scheme while NGOs 2 and 3 offered support for out-patient health care on need by need basis. From the four NGOs, it is my view that NGO 2 provided more expansive and diverse programmes focusing on key aspects of livelihood such as education, health, food as well as cash transfers and small-scale micro financing programme coupled with technical training to beneficiaries.

NGO 1	NGO 2	NGO 3	NGO 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational support</li> <li>• Food support</li> <li>• Cash transfers</li> <li>• National hospital insurance cover</li> <li>• Self-help Microfinance groups</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Clothing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational support</li> <li>• Home Food support</li> <li>• Cash transfers</li> <li>• Medical support</li> <li>• Self-help Microfinance groups</li> <li>• Farming and nutrition technical training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational support</li> <li>• School feeding programme</li> <li>• Medical support (On need basis)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational support</li> <li>• Food support (On need basis)</li> <li>• National hospital insurance cover</li> <li>• Housing</li> </ul>

Table 4.0: Summary of NGOs programmes.

#### 4.3.1 Educational programmes

The common NGO educational support programme included child sponsorship, feeding programmes, uniform and book support among others. The NGOs revealed that the educational support was not provided to all slum children and youth but to those selected

through a process to identify the most needy and vulnerable children. For instance, orphans, child headed families, those living with grandparents or elderly guardians and victims of sexual or physical abuse and children of parents/guardians living with terminal ailments such as HIV/AIDS, cancer were mostly considered.

*“We enrol only five children per year according to our education policy. We receive a list from the school headteacher and then we organise family visitations by our social workers to verify the conditions of the families. Most children are found to be living in extremely deprived conditions” (NGO official, 4)*

Once enrolled into the programme children and young people benefited from text books and the necessary stationery, continuous access to school uniforms and shoes as well as full tuition fees from the point of entry till the highest educational level one can reach. Nevertheless, some NGOs offered partial educational support. For example, one participated noted that:

*“In secondary school the total fees are 18000 Ksh (App 180 USD) but we receive only 4000 Ksh (40 USD) and the rest is left on us, even when we have other children to educate, which shows the support is not very beneficial” (Beneficiary participant, 12)*

This means that if a child is enrolled while in the kindergarten they are supported through primary school, secondly school, college/university/technical levels until they are acquired education and skills that can help them become independent.

*Our school scholarship programme is robust and supports children from kindergarten all the way to college. Besides we provide fees, uniform and books (NGO official 1)*

Education support was the most popular support initiative from the NGOs to slums families. It appeared that NGOs, government and beneficiary participant had a high regard for education therefore the predominance of the education related support programmes. Apparently, due to the high unemployment and lack of possibility for upward social mobility, education is perceived as the most probable way since educated people have high chances for white collar jobs in the state and private sector. All NGOs has a sponsorship plan for children although there were differences in delivery with two NGOs opting to send cash transfers to parents/guardians since parents had to top up the money as it was not adequate while the

other two paid directly to the educational institutions and covered the fees in entirety. The numbers supported are relatively low compared to those in need within the slums. Some NGOs only provided school fees and left the burden of providing for books and uniforms to the parents who confessed to being incapable to provide.

*“The greatest support we receive is education for our children which focuses on 1 child but if they can find ways of economically empowering parents they can become self-reliant and manage to support the whole family” (Beneficiary participant 9)*

#### **4.3.2 Health programmes**

The health programmes by the NGOs seemed to focus majorly on the children, the elderly, people living with HIV/AIDS, and the disabled people. Like the education programme, those who benefited from health support programme were through targeted approach where NGOs only focused on the very desperate cases.

*“I got into the NGO project when our house got burnt, my grandson was inside and had serious burns but luckily through the programme support he was given quality treatment” (Parent beneficiary 38)*

According to findings from this study, medical support did not seem as a priority issue for NGOs. However, it was difficult to identify the reason why since NGO officials seemed uneasy to reply when asked. Among the four NGOs 2 and 3 had targeted provision for outpatient medical support while NGOs 1 and 4 enrolled targeted children in the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) scheme.

*“We support our beneficiaries with access to healthcare. We have partnership with county hospital where they can be referred to for chronic illness. Besides the church mission hospitals work with us” (NGO official 1)*

*“In the project they pay NHIF (national hospital insurance fund) cover for children and parent” (beneficiary participant 12)*

It was not clear why there were negligible efforts to healthcare provision by the NGOs although most acknowledged offering support to HIV/AIDS patients in the slums which is a supplement to the HIV/AIDS programmes offered by the Kenyan government. In summary, while people in the slums lives in environments full of health hazards and are exposed to a

myriad of health risks it was concerning that healthcare is not on top of priorities for the NGOs despite their knowledge that the state do not have a universal or subsidised access to the expensive health services in public and private hospitals in Kenya.

### **4.3.3 Microfinance self-help programmes**

Self-help microfinance programmes and direct household cash transfers were also part of the slum support programmes. NGOs 1 and 2 had similar microfinance programmes organised in form of groups where parents/guardians formed groups through which they save money and get access to loan services from the NGOs to engage in social economic activities.

*“We have a cash transfer programme and micro finance groups in which they save money, borrow loans and get dividends annually. For instance, one can get 7000 ksh as interest earned. Currently we have 3 million Ksh in circulation” (NGO official 6)*

Majority of beneficiaries acknowledged that they participated in the programmes and cited varying degree of satisfaction. For instance, some highlighted they had managed to start micro business such as retail shops, others had done subsistence farming all achieving relative degree of success in term of sustainability and continuity. Those who engaged in farming confessed to having incurred losses since the seeds and fertilizers were expensive coupled with unstable weather conditions such as little rainfall. However, those who invested in small scale sale of raw and cooked foodstuff consisting of mostly young women pointed relatively positive outcomes. Then there was a category of individuals who borrowed the money and utilised it in consumable goods and services instead of investment ventures, due to high deprivations in their households.

*“I have taken the loan 4 times now each at 10,000 ksh and used the money to pay school fees and make ‘ngumus’ (slang for cakes) in which I got 400 Ksh per packet. I am not sure how much profit I made though since I don’t have any book keeping training, but I think it is slightly profitable. It is beneficial that they combine cash transfers and loans” (Parent beneficiary, 37)*

*“One has to belong in a self-help group to get a loan. I took a loan for business, but it didn’t work out, so I took another for farming and there was poor crop production due to failed rainfall” (Participant beneficiary, 33)*

*“I belong to a self-help group called maridadi (beautiful) where we save and get loans. Recently I took a loan of 10,000 Ksh which I used to build a kitchen, and pay pending school fees” (Parent beneficiary 26)*

The NGOs that operated self-help microfinance programmes stated that this was meant to economically empower the slum families. The success of this programme is debatable. Firstly, the groups are few and all groups only involve women since they were said to be more interested than men. Besides, most beneficiary participants acknowledged that the initiatives were good ideas, but they cited that there is no guarantee that their ventures will succeed and there is no cushioning in case things go wrong. According to study findings, this was possibly because most people who took loans focused on meeting immediate basic needs such as good housing and paying school fees while the NGOs expected them to engage in money making activities which only a handful did. Even for those who ventured into economic activities such as small-scale businesses or farming, the returns were negligible, while others found the money not enough for the capital they needed to finance their business ideas.

*“We had a self-help group and got one of us trained with soap making but we could not afford the machines needed for processing soap, so the programme has failed and need to provide enough capital” (Parent beneficiary 30)*

In summary, while the young and middle-aged women beneficiaries were receptive to loans and business ideas, the elderly beneficiaries seemed doubtful of the micro financing initiatives across the two NGOs in this study. Instead they tended to spend the loan money on consumable goods. The transformative capacity of the microfinance initiative within slums of Meru town remains doubtful. It is evident that there is not enough participation from most of the slum community with huge predominance of women, therefore highlights the need to find ways to involve men and the youth. Besides, more elaborate means to provide substantial capital combined with business and technical training to increase the chances of making these programmes successful.

#### **4.3.4 Basic needs and housing support**

NGOs stated that while they did not have any organised programme to provide housing they have engaged in supporting some slum families in extremely desperate circumstances particularly with housing renovations and purchase of household appliances such as beddings and furniture on a need by need basis. The home support is not usually budgeted for, but

decisions are taken after home visits where NGOs are forced to look for resources to support families which for instance live in inhabitable conditions of dilapidated houses or lacking toilets or beddings.

*“We receive a food grant although its small and usually it comes sporadically but its better than nothing” (Beneficiary participant 9)*

*“My child is enrolled in the feeding programme organised by the NGO at the school, they have snack at 11 and lunch and dinner before coming home” (Beneficiary participant 23)*

*“Our ‘Direct Family Funding’ (DFF) is meant to support the most desperate families. Money is sent directly to their bank accounts and they chose what to spend with it. (NGO officer 6)*

While this shows a level of altruism among the NGOs it is also questionable why they do not plan focused programmes on household provision if indeed it deserved priority among the beneficiaries.

#### **4.3.5 Targeting and selection**

All NGOs except 1 had seemingly elaborate and strictly organised methods of selecting their beneficiaries and the most desperate cases were always their priority. However, it is not always that the recruitment was as fair as expected where sometimes the neediest were omitted knowingly or unknowingly by the recruitment teams. During this study, beneficiaries particularly from NGO 1 confessed that they were not the neediest and were in search of NGO support but still joined the programmes because the NGO officials or other beneficiaries requested them to without subjecting them to any background checks.

*“Sometimes relatively economically better individuals are enrolled, since the decision are made by committee alone, there is an element of corruption and unfairness in recruitment, but we have no say on what is done” (Beneficiary, participant 1)*

*“I got in through a friend who said I can benefit from the NGO. I never said I was needy, but she emphasised that the NGO needed to fill up a list of the numbers needed for the particular recruitment drive”*

#### **4.4 Effectiveness of NGO Programmes**

According to most beneficiaries as well as the officials of NGOs, there is wide acknowledgement that NGOs programmes and activities have great impact on the improving the livelihood of slum dwellers. However, this impact is questionable as majority of beneficiaries stated that while they had benefited most acknowledged their conditions of life had not changed significantly. A section of NGO officials highlighted that high expectation among slums dwellers on NGOs may have contributed to the perception that NGOs didn't make significant impact on them.

*“Being in the NGO programme has not had no difference to my family, we still sleep in the same conditions and the support is too little, getting on 3000 Ksh (30) USD for school fees and 1 blanket in 5 years” (Beneficiary participant 25)*

*“Household priorities need to be considered more because NGOs tend to focus majorly on school fees, sometimes children sleep on the floor without beddings” (Beneficiary participant, 2)*

*“The community is entirely dependent on us (NGO). While we expect the community and the beneficiaries to contribute to the programme, there is almost nothing forthcoming while those supported do not put any extra effort” (NGO official, 1)*

NGO representatives and parents/guardians concurred that it needed more than just NGO intervention to achieve significant poverty reduction and transformation of slum communities. Indeed, sections of parents/guardians argued that NGO programmes provided very minimal financial and non-monetary support. From the study, majority of those who seemed to concur with this are those who stayed at home or had no other source of income like work or support from elsewhere. In this case the only income/support was from the NGO which was in no way enough for the household need. However, of the two NGOs operating cash transfers, NGO 2 had a more convenient means of disbursing the money while NGO 4 had challenges with keeping the correct timelines.

*“The money is too little to enable us to do something beneficial, and things have changed since the former Catholic nun left. The flow of money has become inconsistent, like we are now in January and haven't received the December quota.*

*To some extent it feels like we are being used and receiving so little” (Beneficiary participant, 37)*

*“The money provided is too little, we get around Ksh 3,100 per month (USD30), and it is not consistently coming and not enough even for school fees. Sometimes we wait after 3 months. However, the self-help microfinance allows me to take loans to pay school fees. (Participant beneficiary, 35)*

In the long-term, sections of participants were in a unanimous agreement that NGO programmes cannot combat poverty, but they are supplementing to make things less worse off than before and people need to be supported to create income by themselves.

*“I have seen a huge difference for being part of the project. My child is now settled in school, and never gets sent home for fees like before. Besides he gets fed at school, I have also changed as an individual and am more focused to support the remaining 5 children because their father ran away” (Beneficiary participant 23)*

*“NGOs are not the best means of fighting poverty, they seem like business entities since they get a lot of donor funding yet only a small fraction reaches the people in the slums” (Beneficiary Participant 36)*

*“NGOs do pretty good work, but they support only a few so there is need to for a comprehensive programme that covers everyone maybe a providing capital of a wide range cash transfer programme” (Beneficiary participant 13)*

Many participants expressed concern that most NGO programmes in the slums seemed to focus on educational support for children. As a result, NGO support was channelled to schools and not directly to the families thereby disregarding other crucial aspects of child deprivation. For instance, some households did not have enough food, lacked access to clean water and sanitation and did not have quality housing which were equally priority issues as education. Some of these deprivations according to the participants undermined participation of children in the school sponsorship programmes.

*“School sponsorships alone cannot end poverty in a family; the parents certainly need to do more” (Beneficiary participant 12)*



*“At times they are out of touch with our needs. We normally get vouchers to spend in specific items e.g clothes but sometimes we lack other essential things like food” (Beneficiary participant 7)*

*“NGOs play a huge role in fighting poverty, but they cannot eliminate poverty and all the needs in a family. They support only 1 child and the others at times end up dropping out of school” (Beneficiary participant, 20)*

NGOs also faced criticism from sections of participants that they were driven by profiteering rather helping slum communities. Many people argued that they seemed not to provide the expected long-term solutions and at times were elitist. From both the NGO officials and the beneficiaries, there was a perception of disconnect in terms of participation and ownership of the programmes. The only exception was the relatively young educated and socially active beneficiaries who felt some level of engagement in decision making and mobilisation of other slums community members.

*“NGOs are not the best means of combating poverty, they seem to be here for business rather than help the people. They pay high salaries for their workers, drive big cars and have big titles for their jobs and look for money using our children for self-gain where little is spent on us. The manipulate children to get dressed for donors to see how efficient they are, and I have told my children not to take any more photos from now” (Beneficiary participant 16)*

Meanwhile, officials from NGOs tended to overrepresent the reality regarding the effectiveness of their programmes. From the findings of this study some NGOs participants made it look like NGOs were so efficient and even almost capable of solving the problems within slums.

*“Our programme has had a huge impact on this community. If it were not for us, even the physical growth of the beneficiaries would have been affected. Moreover, majority would not receive education and in case we closed, there is no way the beneficiaries would come out poverty” (NGO official 1)*

In evaluating the effectiveness of NGOs, parents/guardians noted that combating poverty is a multifaceted issue and requires solutions of holistic nature rather than bit part interventions. As such provision of education or health programmes cannot address poverty on their own.

*“NGOs only support one child per family and this is nowhere near enough, so we should look for more comprehensive ways of supporting all family members”*  
(Beneficiary participant, 3)

Another element that seemed clear from all the NGOs was that their support was very limited in terms of scope. While the NGOs themselves did not provide numbers of beneficiaries, the beneficiaries sampled for this study highlighted that all the people within slums needed support, but NGOs only selected a few of them. For instance, NGO 3 highlighted that they picked only five kindergarten children to join their school sponsorship and feeding programme annually and acknowledged that the numbers of needy children were underwhelming yet they had no capacity to take more due to donor restrictions.

On whom does the responsibility of slum children and households for on, participants seemed to blame themselves and the state. Participants across gender and age had universal opinion that NGOs cannot eliminate their poverty conditions and that the state and themselves needed to do more. However, they seemed not to know how or what to do to change their situations calling on the state intervention especially in providing employment for the many unemployed slum youth. Even then it was categorically clear that they considered the state as an enabler for them rather than being the “saviour” out of poverty. They considered any support whether from the state or from NGOs as a privilege and almost an undeserved gesture. Others pointed out that the state in a key player and should be more involved in the slum transformation process.

*“NGOs cannot totally eliminate poverty. It is the responsibility of the parent”*  
(Participant beneficiary 4)

*“There is no one to help the needy, and the government need to buy land, install water and educate the children”* (Participant beneficiary 14)

*“One has to find a job or way to make ends meet, but also the state need to help fight unemployment among those between 30-40 years with young families. Jobs are the answer”* (participant Beneficiary 9)

Despite being lauded as crucial intervention measure, findings of this study revealed that to an extent NGOs did propagate dependency syndrome amongst the beneficiaries. All NGO officials admitted to having experienced it and, in most cases, found it as an unwanted

characteristic of the dynamic relationship between NGOs and beneficiary communities. The beneficiaries gave contradictory statements on whether NGO programmes catalysed dependency syndrome. Those who had small businesses or did day to day jobs like construction and cleaning perceived NGO support as supplementary to their income while those who did not have any other source and mostly stayed at home acknowledged to being dependent on their NGO support. A few participants highlighted that NGO programmed cultivated laziness amongst beneficiaries since they know the support will come and therefore felt no added pressure to work unlike those who never received any support. However participant beneficiaries who had jobs or engaged in business argued that the NGO support was not enough. Its evident that the productivity of individuals influenced if they were dependent or not with a clear pattern of the working and non-working ones.

*“Dependency syndrome is very common with NGO programmes in which we need more of attitude change through education. We need to communicate strongly that we are not here to stay and encourage people towards becoming self-reliant” (NGO official 5)*

*“People in this slum have got dependency syndrome, they always wait for a new NGO and they go announcing and everyone come rushing to enrol their children. Our policy is to sponsor one child per family, but we have at times disregarded that since some parents have many children who are so vulnerable. They think NGOs should always take the burden” (NGO official 6)*

*“People still work hard despite the NGO support they receive, the fact that only 1 child is under direct support means the burden of other children is on the parent/caregiver” (Beneficiary participant 14)*

*“Some people with many children exaggerate the budget so that we get more resources to share with other children even if only 1 is sponsored. Some parents have withdrawn from working after receiving sponsorships and just wait to send their budget to the NGO. Yeah, they propagate dependency, but it is wrong to take advantage” (Beneficiary participant 10)*

This study was dominated by gender issues raised by both NGO officials and beneficiaries of the NGO programmes. Firstly, out of 40 beneficiaries only 3 were men. However, among

NGO officials the male to female ratio was 3:3 similarly with government officials where the ratio was 1:1, even though these ratios were coincidental and not scientifically reached at. When it came to the support groups, NGOs claimed that their enrollment was balanced in terms of the numbers of boys and girls. During the study, I sought to find out, the reasons why more women were involved than men. Firstly, most of the women in the NGO support programmes were single ladies, widowed or elderly taking care of grandchildren.

*“Some men are irresponsible; they impregnate women and desert them, so there are many single mothers. Besides some men when they are given money by the NGOs spend on themselves instead on children and family” (Female participant, 11)*

Besides, the married women cited the lack of support from their husbands or partners as the mitigating factor which compelled them to seek NGO support. On one hand the empathetic and caring character of mothers coupled with the biological and cultural roles of women were cited among the lady interviewees as possible reasons thus women took it upon themselves to fill the vacuum left by men. However, some ladies tried to defend men, asserting that even men care for children and families, while others do not participate due to work commitments all meant to support the family and not abdication of their fatherly responsibilities.

*“Men desert their wives and children when they go to the city to look for work. I joined the programme when my husband went to work in Nairobi and lied to me that he is saving money for us, so I struggled alone with my children and realized he had married another woman. When my kids ask for money he tells them he has no money” (Female beneficiary Participant, 22)*

*“The money is too little, yet we have to queue from 7 in the morning to 4 p.m. Men do not withstand such things and think it’s a waste of time, yet for me it is not” (Female beneficiary Participant, 24)*

*“I am a woman; I have nothing but to struggle to find means for the children” (Female beneficiary Participant 27)*

*“I take the children as my own, men just deal with work and leave children to women” (Female beneficiary Participant, 36)*

*“Men try to care, and maybe they don’t go to the programme meetings because of important things like work” (Female beneficiary participant, 34)*

On the other hand, the fathers in this study agreed and disagree with the mothers. For instance, they argued that not all men are irresponsible, and a few do engage, however they agreed that most men see it as a woman’s responsibility while others are just hard headed and disinterested. Moreover, a section of women interviewed said that the amount of money was little, and the process was bureaucratic and time consuming and therefore a potential reason for the negligible participation of men. Amongst both mothers and fathers, it was clear that men in the slums are problematic and facing issues of drugs and alcoholism, irresponsible fatherhood, and male chauvinism.

*“Most men tend to feel shameful and embarrassed to have their children sponsored, others tend to be impatient while there is so much bureaucracy within the NGOs” (Female Participant 15)*

*“Only mothers feel the pain of the child. Men go to drink when they can’t provide for their families to deal with stress and avoid being questioned. In the slums, the woman’s money is for the family and the man’s is for himself, I have never told my husband that the child is sponsored because he would stop sending us money” (Female Participant 19)*

*“I am male, and I have been attending all meetings, although we have been less men than women...maybe due to men having other priorities but also egoistic and hard headed” (Male participant, 26)*

#### **4.5 Challenges facing NGO programmes in the slums**

Most NGOs pointed out that while they had experienced relative success in implementing programmes to combat poverty in the slums. However, they faced obstacles which compromise their efforts. For instance, ignorance among beneficiaries was a huge concern amongst middle aged and elderly had basic or no education while majority of NGO staff and content is made in English or Swahili and rarely in Kimeru which is the language of the catchment area. Moreover, NGOs cited uncooperative beneficiaries or guardians caused by in-attendance to meetings, disregard for instructions and misuse of money. Stigma was also mentioned as problematic to NGOs work where the larger community seemed unappreciative

of those targeted for NGOs programmes, however this could equally be jealousy rather than stigma since all people are extremely poor and deserve support.

*“One faces potential rejection from the community if under NGO support because it is highly stigmatised despite most people being very needy” (Beneficiary Participant 1)*

*“In some schools, we are rejected, and our children stigmatised for being sponsored often labelled in our name” (NGO official 6)*

Besides, NGOs also were perceived as elitist particularly those who received western donor aid. As a result, this makes it difficult to the community to feel ownership of the programmes and makes it difficult for the programme to attract local donors. This is very problematic because the NGO activities divide the people against each other. Those who benefit versus those who do not. This can bring jealousy and disturb harmony and even put the beneficiary at a security risk. More damaging is that this sort of perception greatly undermines the objectives of the organisation due to the broken relationship with the local community.

*“People around view us as elitist and rich organisation since they look at the posh buildings, and how well the children are cared for and this sends the perception that this organisation is super rich” (NGO official 5)*

Lastly, NGOs cited inadequate funds as a major challenge, since did not have financial and infrastructural resources to adequately mitigate on child poverty in the slums.

#### **4.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter offered on various issues particularly the programme focus of NGOs, the frame conditions in which they operate perspectives from NGOs and beneficiaries on effectiveness of strategies seeking to combat child poverty and the challenges encountered. While there are interesting insights, it is visible that not many patterns have emerged from the data, but rather more generalised findings have emerged from the participants. This could be attributed to the homogenous nature of both the NGO officials and beneficiaries sampled in this study. This however does not limit or undermine the meaningfulness of the data and study findings which are presented in a more detailed discussion in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of this study in relation to the theoretical framework used in this study. The discussion will seek to bring out insights from this study in relation to the research questions for this study as set out in chapter one.

#### 5.1 Definition of poverty

Child poverty continues to be a difficult concept to define even to those experiencing its extreme nature due to its complexity and different dimensions which it entails. Without a clear conceptualisation of poverty among slums people and NGOs, it is seemingly difficult to develop intervention measures that can address the specific aspects of poverty among slum dwellers. The World Bank (2017) asserts that poverty is stark and conceptually elusive and requires clear measures of living standards. It seems that slum dwellers recognize the multidimensional aspect of poverty more compared to the income dimension since they describe what they lack because of absence or reduced income rather than perceive income itself as the most important however the study found no clear difference between child poverty and poverty in general. Lang and Lingnau (2015) posit that multi-dimension poverty focuses on composite issues related to inadequacies in various spheres of life such as living standards, job, medical-health, income, nutrition, education, housing and assets, power and security among others. Besides, while this study reveals that poverty is not seen from the lenses of which group it affects such as children or adults but is seen through multidimensional lenses in household shows that child poverty is rarely differentiated from poverty in general and its special dimensions are seldom recognized (UNICEF, 2005). However, the seemingly multidimensional of poverty among slum communities corresponds to the MODA approach (KNBS and UNICEF, 2017) of measuring poverty which focuses on deprivation of individual child in 3 of 6 of dimensions which include nutrition, physical development, health, education, water, sanitation, housing, access to information and health related knowledge rather than monetary poverty. It is therefore crucial that NGOs take into consideration the right based view of children poverty where deprivations of many of their rights including survival, health and nutrition, education, participation, and protection from

harm, exploitation and discrimination is anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).

## **5.2 Kenyan policy and frame conditions for NGOs**

This section will discuss the Government policy regarding NGOs and further elucidate the issues that possibly influence the frame conditions of NGOs working in Kenya.

### **5.2.1 Definition of an NGO according to the Kenyan government**

The official legal definition of NGOs in Kenya, which are defined in the NGO Act as “private voluntary grouping of individuals, not operated for profit or for other commercial purposes, but which have organized themselves nationally or internationally for the benefit of the public at large and for the promotion of social welfare, development charity or research in the areas inclusive of, but not restricted to, health, relief, agriculture, education, industry and the supply of amenities and services (Government of Kenya, 2012). The definition illuminates a strong emphasis on promotion of welfare services, charity and research, which I find to be narrow particularly with the findings from this study indicating that some NGOs while focused on provision of services seeks to integrate elements of social justice promotion and advocacy within their work. For instance, NGO 2 in this study advocated for prosecution of child sexual offenders a role which is outside service provision. The government’s definition can be construed to mean that the government do not appreciate/recognise other NGOs outside of service provision such as advocacy, governance and human rights programmes. In a more generalised view seemingly aimed at putting together all NGOs, Vakil (2007) points out that NGOs are private, not for profit organisations whose aim is to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged people. It is my view that the current government definition of NGOs in Kenya needs to be reviewed to make it more inclusive and ensure all NGOs are perceived to be important whether they are focused on service provision or other activities because NGOs are generally diverse due to their roles and structure (Lewis and Kanji, 2009) and are not easy to classify.

### **5.2.2 Policy frame conditions as regard operations of NGOs in Kenya**

NGO operations have a legal framework on which their work and activities are underpinned but it remains to be seen how government institutions such as the police, the courts and NGO Coordination Board facilitate and adhere to these legal guidelines. The rights of all NGOs are entrenched in chapter 134 of the Kenya NGO Coordination Act (Government of Kenya,



2012) particularly section 80 of the act which provides for the freedom of association and assembly and the right to freedom of speech. Besides, Kenya has a non-taxation policy exclusively for NGOs that do not engage in income generating activities widely commended as an effort towards stimulating the work of NGOs. Despite the positive reviews of the state policy, study findings reveal that the government is making consistent efforts to introduce capping for international funding of NGOs is shows the power contest that exist between NGOs and the government of Kenya. This is basically meant to reduce the capacity of NGOs to ensure they are not a threat to the state legitimacy as well as efforts by the government to limit external influence on Kenya from international donors. Brass (2012) and Republic of Kenya (2006), claim that NGOs in Kenya, regardless of where they were established are funded via international sources. A Daily Nation editorial story revealed that NGOs in Kenya are largely funded by international donors citing only 18 Billion Ksh of funding is locally generated while 100 Billion came from international donors (Karanja and Kilonzo, 2015). The Daily Nation article further highlighted that 510 more charitable organizations been deregistered for failing to file audited financial reports as required by law (Karanja and Kilonzo, 2015). While the state has a policy that coordinates and controls NGOs, it has been criticised for lacking a clear policy to facilitate and guide urban development with most existing urban interventions largely made on an ad hoc basis (UN-Habitat, 2003).

### **5.2.3 Government and NGO policy in the slums**

While the government has policy that guide and control operations of NGOs there is seemingly a fragment approach in terms of policy development and implementation between NGOs and the state according to this study. One of the roles of the Kenyan NGO coordination board is to provide policy guidelines to the NGOs for harmonizing their activities to the National Development Plan for Kenya (Government of Kenya, 2012) however it is not clear how this role is effectively implemented. Oxfam (2009) assert that there are many projects in place set to address slum issues such as improved water supply, sanitation, food security and education although little achievements have reached due to among other factors, the uncoordinated implementation of programmes, lack of clear mandate among the many players operating in the urban sector and the absence of a robust urban development policy nationally. The prospects of change within slums will remain greatly compromised if the status quo of the fragmented state and NGO policies and programmes currently existing remains. World Bank (2008) and UN-Habitat (2003) argue

that it is possible that lack of a precise definition of the concept ‘slum’ may have contributed to the lack of cohesive, effective and tailored policy response leading to a rather bleak outlook of slums situation in Kenya. It is therefore crucial that a new joint approach is adopted to bring together all stakeholders towards creating a clear universal policy that can facilitate and guide slum development instead of the existing ad hoc interventions.

#### **5.2.4 NGOs as a potential threat to the government**

Findings from this study indicated that the Kenyan government’s attitude is to narrow down the space for NGOs to ensure they operate within a very controlled environment despite its apparent recognition as important players within development. The NGO coordination board has seemingly prioritized controlling NGOs with strict guidelines regarding misappropriation, embezzlement and diversion of donor funds, money laundering and terrorism financing. While regulation of the NGO sub-sector is crucial, it is important that this power to regulate is not misused specially to target tyrant NGOs that refuse to conform to the political status quo. Radley (2008) argue that in 1990 the Kenyan government introduced NGO coordination bill as a measure to monitor and control NGOs due to perceived threat to government legitimacy because of consistent criticism of the state governance practices. Indeed, the state can be an enabling tool or a stumbling block to NGOs work according to this study since the Kenyan government seem to fit in both categories. Brass (2012) posit that the Moi government did not target only NGOs working on human rights and democratization but also targeted poverty-relief organizations if they seemed to pose a political threat. For instance, claims of murder and harassment of several governance and human rights NGO leaders have been common and relations between the politically charged NGOs and the government have declined drastically (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Study findings indicate that the Kenyan government continues to exert pressure and tension on NGOs working within advocacy, empowerment and human rights while seemingly acts friendly towards service providing ones. The Kenyan government apparent unwelcome attitude towards any form of criticism and censure from NGOs can be regarded as a form of authoritarian governance regime. In fact, in an article published by the Standard digital on 25<sup>th</sup> March, the outgoing chair of NGO coordination board Mr, Fazul was asked why the board was targeting NGOs dealing with governance and human rights issues, he dismissed it arguing that NGOs that aren’t not offering services are stuck in the past however few. The claims from Mr.Fazul and the findings of this study further reinforce the view that the Kenyan government remains

relatively hostile host towards sections of the NGOs and the disregard to the constitutional rights of some NGOs is an indictment of the impunity and disregard to the rule of law by the state by not acknowledging that dissenting NGOs have a role to play. The tremendous increase in the number of NGOs in the last decades can be construed to mean that Kenya has a welcoming and enabling environment for NGO operations. However, the identity and mission of an NGO is crucial in determining how it is likely to be treated by the state and therefore numbers of registered NGOs alone cannot be an objective indicator.

### **5.2.5 Relationship and joint programs between state and NGOs**

Increase of NGOs represent a growing trend of “NGO-isation” of Kenyan society (Hearn, 1998 pg.35) in which she contends that the proliferation of international and local NGOs and the western sponsorship of private voluntary organizations to play an increasingly pivotal role in the economic, social and political life has expanded tremendously with Kenya having registered 15,000 NGOs by April 2018 (Musau, 2018). The Kenyan government does not perceive itself as a financing partner to NGO projects even though NGO expect and welcome the state. Majority of NGOs in Kenya therefore receive funding from international donors and almost nothing from the state (Brass, 2012). The lack of joint funding between the state and the NGOs for project in the slums a possibility for intentional lack of cooperation between them or that funding is not a priority area of cooperation between the state and NGOs. For instance, the state funded cash transfer programme dubbed “Inua Jamii” in Swahili which means “lift the community” under the National Safety Net Programme aimed at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of safety net support to poor and vulnerable populations in Kenya (Government of Kenya, 2016) seemed a replica of the cash transfer programmes by two NGOs in the study findings. Moreover, there didn’t seem to be much cooperation both in policy and in action however Brass (2012, pg. 218) posits that the Kenyan government and NGOs have a streamlined relationship in which the “NGOs now sit on government policymaking boards, development committees, and stakeholder forums; their strategies and policies are integrated into national planning documents; and their methods of decision making have, over time, become embedded in government’s own and that NGOs have become institutionalized in the governing processes of public service provision,”. USAID (1995) argue that even though the Government of Kenya may appear at times to be a reluctant partner, it is not monolithic since various ministries and departments have become key players. I contend that more efforts are needed to advocate for increased state-NGO

cooperation as this can bring the legitimacy needed in consolidating slum development. This study finds that this could happen but would require the more commitment from the state especially with funding since the NGOs seemed very willing to work with the state. The abdication of financing in slums programmes by the state is perceived by this study as an indicator of the state's alignment to neoliberal policies anchored on reduced state provision of basic services to the people and allow the power of markets to influence supply and demands towards efficient economy (Kiamba and Mazongo, 2011). The alignment of the state to neoliberal policies can arguably create further poverty instead of resolving it since the slum dwellers only minimally participate in income generating activities for lack of means of production. Indeed, Bukenya and Hickey (2014) assert that most the private sector in most African countries remains small profitable niches which exclude the majority thereby necessitating NGO intervention. According to the study findings, NGO interventions are crucial to the slum communities to fill in the gaps that market forces could not among the disadvantaged and excluded poor people (Bratton, 1989). Even then, I opine that the view of NGOs as development partners to the state in poverty eradication could positively change if NGOs gained significant influence on government policy documents and action plans such as the Kenya Vision 2030 (Government of Kenya, 2008) and economic recovery strategy plans which seek to combat poverty amongst the poorest in Kenya. However, this may be potentially difficult to achieve in the light of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in which the possibility for involvement of the state at the same par as NGOs remains in jeopardy in the light of the market liberalization policies although NGOs have increased the campaign to call for broader vision to development which brings increased funding to important sectors such as education, health and compensation for vulnerable groups (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

### **5.3 NGO Programmes and activities in slums**

This study revealed that the most popular NGO programmes were education, health and microfinance self-help groups/ cash transfers respectively. Kameri-Mbote (2000) asserts that while the typology and activities of NGOs are diversified, the focus of most lies in social and welfare activities including health, food and nutrition water and sanitation, education, relief services, programmes for disabled persons, children, youth, women, destitute, religion among others.

### **5.3.1 Educational programmes**

Educational support and general focus to education was highly prioritised across all NGOs. There seemed a mutually shared belief among the slum people and NGOs that education was potentially the most effective way of getting out of poverty. As a result, NGO supported educational programmes and offered many possibilities such as feeding programmes, uniforms and tuition fees sponsorship towards ensuring that slum children gain education. NGOs have become the main service providers in countries where the government is unable to fulfil its traditional role, for instance, in education, many NGOs are increasing moving beyond ‘gap-filling’ initiatives into capacity building activities where they take on activities of basic education provision (Ulleberg, 2009). Bearing the fact that only 24% of slum population in Kenya has attained secondary education (World Bank, 2008), the narrow provision of educational support by NGOs shows that countries cannot achieve universal access to education (UNESCO, 2000) through charity. However, educational support has considerable impact in increasing enrolment of children in schools and equally reducing absenteeism. According to Evans, Kremer and Ngatia (2004), a Child Sponsorship Program (CSP) in Western Kenya found that receiving a school uniform had a positive impact on student school participation in which there was an increase in school participation and reduced school absenteeism by 6.4 %. While major progress has been made towards increasing access to education and increasing enrolment rates in schools United Nations (2015) do acknowledge that more bolder efforts are needed to make further progress in achieving universal education especially in sub-Saharan Africa where more than half of children half of the children population is yet to be enrolled in school. More importantly, NGOs offering educational support went no further to ascertain the quality of education services that the beneficiaries access. Provision of funding and other educational elements like uniform and books is not enough since a compromised quality of education is likely to result to negative outcomes for the children supported.

### **5.3.2 Health programmes**

While health is a vital component of the society and development this study found that it was not accorded the highest priority among the NGO programmes. While this study did not identify a possible reason for the limited involvement of NGOs in health programmes in Meru town, a study in Kibera slum in Nairobi concluded that the costly nature of offering

medical services greatly discouraged NGOs particularly about medical licenses, land, construction costs, medicine and technical expertise all attributed to the high costs of health service delivery that prevented more NGOs from operating in the said location (Salim, 2010). Moreover, Barr and Fafshamps (2005) highlight that the health sector is very sensitive and very prone to potential tension between government and NGOs due to increased state control of healthcare providers. The narrow approach for NGOs in the slum to support healthcare on need by need basis where they react to illnesses among beneficiaries is an indicator of the curative approach to healthcare instead of preventive approach bearing in mind the high risk of contracting both water-borne and airborne diseases due to poor water and sewerage systems as well as congestions, and poor housing conditions.

Focusing on curative measure for the few is short-sighted in my opinion since more people will continue getting sick and putting together a comprehensive healthcare approach involving both preventative and curative domains can go a long way to reducing cost of healthcare budget in the NGOs as well as guaranteeing good health for children and adults living in slums. Radley (2008), contends that there is a predominance of NGOs working particularly on HIV/AIDS and health sector in Kenya which has contributed to a decline of the national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate to 5% but does not mention any other health aspect (UNAIDS, 2007). The emergence of HIV/AIDS as a serious healthcare crisis may have pushed NGOs to concentrate on it and leaving a gap in other important areas of healthcare (Hearn, 2002). Another critical angle to the NGOs work in healthcare particularly in the slums regards sustainability since sporadic free medical check-ups, free drugs and cancer screening occasionally is by far not good enough and cannot reach everyone in the slums. Even then enrolment to the national health insurance fund is a laudable effort but should be spread out to cover all slum dwellers instead of targeting minority beneficiaries. According to Forkuor and Agyemang (2018), some of the ways of improving access and utilization of social services include the provision of medical facilities such as community health centers, registration of beneficiaries under national health insurance schemes, and health education to the urban poor. It is therefore compelling to argue that the NGO led health provision cannot be considered an effective strategy but remains an important substitute catering for the healthcare of the neediest individuals in the slums.

### **5.3.3 Cash transfers and microfinance programmes**

Self-help microfinance programmes and direct household cash transfers were common slum economic support programmes. The main argument for them is that unlike other NGO programmes, cash transfers and microfinancing help people to engage in entrepreneurial activities and leads them to think of income generating ideas. According to Lombard et.al (2012) a community driven project for the urban poor focusing mainly on income-generating programs and job-creation provides training to the local community on business and entrepreneurship skills as well as offering support with marketing for the products aimed at securing income and economic independence of the participants. The cash transfers and microfinance while regarded as a significant strategy by the beneficiaries, their impacts were largely compromised by the limited amount of money transferred or accessed as loans. According to Salim (2010), microfinance programmes in Kibera, Nairobi encountered challenges where beneficiaries lacked business knowhow and resulted to misuse of loans on consumable goods and services. The strategy of income generation among poor people needs to be relooked at and reconfigured to address various dynamics such as ensuring that people will invest and not consume as well as offering business education. However, the concern is that, if poor slum people cannot invest and produce tangible results with little support, can they achieve if more financial resources are given? Moreover, in case the failure of microfinancing to take off is due to individual differences such as lack of business acumen and interest, can NGOs think of other alternatives that can ensure these people generate income? NGOs therefore have a role to play in advocating for the rights of citizens and pressuring the local authorities or other state agencies to provide infrastructure, services and land tenure (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2004). In this case, government and local authorities need to consider allocation land or plots to slum dwellers in which they can engage in income generating activities such as farming, or animal keeping or get raw materials to make goods for sale. The focus of NGOs on land rights particularly amongst low-income households, on structure owner relations, and on the rights of informal workers and women in informal settlements is critical in economically empowering them and lifting them out of endemic poverty (Ibrahim and Hulme, 2010).

## **5.4 Effectiveness of NGO Programmes**

NGOs have come up with a wide range of intervention programmes and activities for slum children and households. This section will discuss the effectiveness of NGOs from the perspectives of participants and what their interventions mean to the slum dwellers and NGOs themselves.

### **5.4.1 Expectations on NGOs**

Despite the benefits from NGO programmes, beneficiaries do not experience huge transformation that lifts them from extreme poverty. Even then there remain considerably huge expectations that NGOs need to increase their provision and engagement with poor people living in the slums. Banks, Hulme and Edwards (2015) argue that serious questions remain on the ability of NGOs to meet their long-term goals of social justice and transformation particularly with development sector seemingly narrowly focused on short-term results and value for money. The services of NGOs are greatly needed, and high expectations are placed on NGOs to deliver more than they have achieved, however there are strong doubts the ability of NGOs to transform the lives of slums dwellers.

### **5.4.2 NGO model or another model?**

NGOs are not the right means of dealing with slum poverty in the long term. The little money received through cash transfers and the selective educational sponsorship of children are examples of reasons that make it doubtful on the ability of NGOs to combat slum poverty. Nega and Shneider (2014) who maintain that while NGOs are well-intentioned entities that often improve the lives of people in poor communities; they are yet to achieve the type of structural transformation necessary for true economic development. Minority parents whose children had been supported all the way to higher education seemed enthusiastic that NGOs had meaningful contribution in the long run. This enthusiasm emanates from the belief that access to education opens possibilities for jobs which leads to therefore translating to high standards of living compared to that experienced in the slums. The disjointed approach to poverty eradication makes it difficult to evaluate whether NGOs in the slums of Meru town are effective or not. While there exist, many criteria based on diverse lenses on which to evaluate NGOs to determine whether successful or not is a complex endeavor because of complex factors and frame conditions in which they operate. But it appears that circumstances rather than will, led to the emergence and this makes it difficult for NGOs to



gain acceptance since they operate between the state and communities and its not known whether their social contract with the people short or long term is. Lewis and Kanji (2009) questions whether the service delivery of NGOs is an effort to bridge the immediate gap for the needs of people or its an end in itself? The Kenyan government does not seem ready to take over responsibilities of service delivery currently held by NGOs which means NGOs will continue to combat poverty within slums. While they have been hailed as a more effective avenue towards poverty alleviation in low-income countries (Porter, 2003) this study has contrasting evidence that NGOs aren't as effective as earlier thought albeit an important player.

### **5.4.3 Individual targeting vs holistic approach**

The study revealed that most NGOs supported orphans, child headed families, those living with grandparents or elderly guardians and victims of sexual or physical abuse and children of parents/guardians living with terminal ailments such as HIV/AIDS, cancer even then due to lack of elaborate recruitment process some relatively able people were recruited to the disadvantage of the neediest. From the study findings, NGOs should focus on delivering holistic programme that meet the needs of human life in a more complementary manner in a bid to address all elements of poverty rather than the current fragmented nature which they provide educational support to targeted children, yet the children and family could be starving for lack of food which in turn undermines school participation and performance. Findings also indicate that the fragmented nature of NGO programmes in the slums may be catalysing inequalities within slums with the beneficiary children and household gaining a relative head start while the rest are left behind. In fact, I contend that fragmented programmes and individual targeting can compromise the gains achieved from the focus on one aspect such as education by neglecting other aspects such as health, nutrition, housing, water and sanitation. Golle (2007) asserts that while children and youth are among the most affected by extreme poverty, poverty eradication should not focus on the group dynamics but rather it is important to be aware that in each grouping there are those who are most deprived, and that poverty is intertwined in different groups. For instance, poverty among children requires understanding of their parents' poverty while combating long-term unemployment also requires attention to health and housing issues. Besides, the interlinked nature of poverty places huge burden on parents to ensure they provide almost equally to the children not under NGO programmes according to this study. NGOs need to consider possibility for wider partnerships to increase

capacity with an intention to expand the scope of reach among poor children and households as well as interdisciplinary approach to programmes.

#### **5.4.4 Accountability of NGOs**

Perception that sections of NGOs are elitist and do not represent the interests of the slum people continue to persist. It is difficult for slum dwellers not to perceive NGOs as self-benefiting entities due to their imposing nature, lack of inclusion of the poor people in decision making and their apparent minimal interest for the people in the local communities. According to Kilby (2006) NGOs are increasingly disregarding their important relationship with beneficiaries as their source of legitimacy and pushing closer towards operational efficiency and policy influence towards fulfilling donor requirements. NGOs in this study rarely consulted beneficiaries in key policies and programme implementation and this made them feel excluded and alienate from the NGOs while ownership of programmes becomes almost non-existent. Edwards and Hulme (1998) question whether NGOs should be answerable to their partners, host governments, beneficiaries or themselves because they are increasingly aligning their strategies per the donor priorities and interests thereby making it difficult to develop tailor-made programs which address the needs and priorities of the local community (Banks, Hulme and Edwards, 2015). Accountability to the community is critical and any NGOs looking for long term engagement should focus on building good rapport through participation with the local community. In this light, NGO's should retain utmost accountability to the people whose lives their activities affect irrespective of their sources of funding whether from the state or oversees donors (Wright, 2012).

#### **5.4.5 Service providing vs Democratization roles of NGOs**

The apparent lack of understanding on the important role of the state in slum development among slum dwellers indicate that poverty goes deeper beyond lack of basic utilities and exposes the ignorance and lack of agency amongst slum dwellers on how interlinked their problems are with the social-political and economic structures. In this light, continued provision of services for slum people should not be the only priority but also empowerment to enlighten them on their civil rights. NGOs have been accused of depoliticizing poverty by treating it as a technical problem which can easily be resolved through social provision and operate outside the political arena where they are unable to contribute in dealing with the more structurally-entrenched causes and manifestations of poverty such as social and political

exclusion (Banks and Hulme, 2012). It is my view that while the role of NGOs need to get into a wider political space, their role as service providers should not be undermined but further strengthened since their provision remains greatly needed by the poorest households within slums. Banks and Hulme (2012) posit that NGOs that can go beyond their role as service providers into advocacy and empowerment facilitators especially democracy-building and transforming state-societal relations. Alternatively, NGOs can work in tandem with the state whereby they can demonstrate strategies and methods for more effective service provision which can foster a strong democratic culture in the local and national level. This study finds that poverty cannot be solved by increasing access to resources or services alone to the poor in the slums. The challenge lies in whether NGOs can indeed adopt effective political participation model in which they can realign their vision and objectives with the grassroots as part of a broader struggle to redefine power relations to enable them to make those in power accountable (Bebbington, et al 2008).

In Kenya, there exists a complex relationship between the state and NGOs based on the type of programmes and activities. The state is friendlier to the service providing NGOs while seemingly hostile to those working with advocacy, governance and for human rights. It is not surprising therefore that according to the Kenyan government's registry of NGOs, over 90% of NGOs focus on service provision, while only 4% are devoted specifically to promoting good governance (Republic of Kenya, 2006). NGOs that are consistent in exposing government scandals and misuse of power and educating people on their civil rights are more likely to be deregistered, have bank accounts frozen and their officials arrested under frivolous accusations to intimidate them. According to Kameri-Mbote (2000), under former President Moi, the government introduced the NGO Act which was used as justification for harassing NGOs, particularly those that pressed for civil liberties, human rights, and environmental protection. For example, the Green Belt Movement founded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai was threatened for its role in pro-democracy activities and was deregistered for some time in 1999 while CLARION was similarly deregistered in 1995 for seemingly political reasons. Apparently, former President Moi had grown increasingly concerned that "NGOs were using donor funds to contest state legitimacy through delivery of services" (Kanyinga, 1996 pg. 82) and this threatened the government in thinking that NGOs were becoming a strong and independent political force with influential political clout that painted the wrong image of the government.

The preference of the state towards NGOs engaging in welfare services can be understood within the lenses of the historical philanthropic roots of NGOs in Kenya which were composed mainly of religious based organisations such as young Men Christian Associations (YMCA) and the Young Women Christian Associations (YWCA) where most engaged in social welfare issues during colonial times (Kameri-Mbote, 2000). I therefore view the current configuration of Kenyan NGOs as having been influenced tremendously by the colonial era particularly their strong focus on social welfare provision which may have made it almost difficult to change from this traditional role. While my study perceives the state as potentially unfriendly to NGOs, in contrast (Brass, 2012) posits that in a study carried out in Kenya, NGO representatives working on service provision or on a combination of civic engagement pointed out that they did not have a negative experience in their interactions with government. Findings from the NGOs in this study, revealed that perception of the NGOs on the state are very varied based on who is asked.

#### **5.4.6 NGOs and dependency syndrome**

NGOs help mitigate extreme poverty however they equally propagate dependency syndrome amongst their beneficiaries. There is a clear need for tactical change on ways in which NGOs offer institutional support to individuals and communities to minimise or prevent development of dependency syndrome. According to Lombard et.al, (2012) the community project by students from the University of Pretoria provided basic utilities such as clothes to their beneficiaries through a point accumulation system in which they are awarded points for their attendance and completion of tasks therefore ensuring they did not ask for handouts but rather utilize their points. Salim (2010) assert that while people-centered and participatory processes in service delivery were visible in successful programmes in Kibera, Nairobi, the major drawback is that they propagated dependency which can prove a hindrance to the effort of developing long term technical skills needed in the long term among beneficiaries.

UNICEF (2009) denies that cash transfers increase dependency and argue that they are normally utilized on immediate consumption needs and/or invested in productive activities or in children's human capital development and therefore are an effective means of empowering and raising productivity of the poor as part of a broader poverty reduction strategy. It is notable that NGO 1 and NGO 2 seemed slightly generous in that they provided full educational support to the sponsored child per family, had housing support, provided NHIF

cover and offered micro finance loans. NGO 2 particularly went further and provided solar lamps for lighting, tanks for water storage and training on nutrition and agriculture in which technical field officers made home visits. From this study, it is arguable that the level of NGO support can influence whether a beneficiary develops dependency syndrome where the more an NGO provides the higher the likelihood of developing dependency. However, it is equally plausible that the beneficiary could have been equally lazy without the NGO programme support. McCord (2005) argue that in low-income countries cash transfers with some conditionality attached such as investments in children's education and health or labour inputs and building of public infrastructure by poor households have been a popular policy response used to allay fears of dependency. The NGO cash transfers in the slums of Meru town had no conditionality demands and therefore it may be significant if the cash transfers were conditionally tied as a preventative measure against dependency.

#### **5.4.7 NGOs and gender**

The participation of men in the NGO slum programmes was very minimal and this raises concern regarding gender inclusion within NGO led slum development agenda with women taking 93% of slots in the sample for this study but also in the wider participation in NGO activities while equally being responsible for family related responsibilities compared to men. Silbershmidt (2001) argue that social-economic changes have increasingly disempowered men greatly, affecting their sense of self-esteem and social value as one of the factors continually overlooked. Social gender roles, biological factors and male patriarchy were at the centre of explaining male inactivity in NGO programmes. Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Moreover, it is claimed that their inability to meet the family needs leaves much financial burden to the women who end up viewing the men with contempt as a result. In the contemporary world, men must contend with new changes within the family setup and most end up feeling inadequate and lose self-esteem (World Bank, 2001). The minimal involvement of men in this study reveals an increasingly worrying trend of men being uncaring towards the welfare of their children and families. Nevertheless, Izugbara (2015) assert that slum men from Kibera slum in Nairobi, seem to understand what priorities they have in their households but also acknowledge their deprivation as a fundamental obstacle in achieving their goals. However, men who fulfil their provider role gain more respect and are

held in high esteem compared to those who are supposedly not doing enough in their role as breadwinners.

This study posits that that poverty underpins the conceptualization of manliness within slums. It is possible that the tough economic conditions coupled with the high expectations of men as breadwinners may have pushed men into drug and alcohol abuse widely blamed for their inability to participate in NGO programmes. Sherman (2005) contend that poverty has the potential to undermine men's social functioning, self-image, and respectability particularly in contexts where proper masculinity is defined in terms of breadwinning and provisioning. It is highly possible that slum life could be slowly revolutionizing the gender roles between men and women. On one hand, findings from this study and those of Izugbara (2015) indicate that men from the slums are opting to take jobs commonly gendered for women such as childcare, cleaning, cooks, home assistants and male prostitutes etc. On the other hand, Taylor et.al (1999) contend that it is more acceptable nowadays for women to participate in paid work than any other time before due to overall decline in men's earnings particularly newly married young men have found it difficult to be the sole providers within families.

This study reveal that slum women can participate in paid labour while fully taking on the burden of being housewives and child carers in their families, but this is not recognised as meaningful contribution. The implication is that women shoulder a double burden of economically providing for the family and equally caring for the social and domestic needs of the children and men altogether which greatly disadvantages them in my opinion but also ensures that men are not made to account for their family responsibilities. The slum women dominant participation in NGO programmes can be mistaken to mean that they are taking over the breadwinning role of men while, it is actually a circumstantial occurrence due to failure of men to accept responsibility and shared participation roles in NGO programmes even when the entire household benefits. It is therefore vital that debates and policy interventions focused on slum women do not only focus on women alone but more so on both women, men, the structural environment under which they operate and the socially constituted relations between them (Whitehead, 1981). Besides, NGOs need to rethink their strategies towards bringing balanced participation of men and women in their programmes. This study finds that programmes focused on one gender are unlikely to combat poverty in the slums.

## **5.5 Challenges facing NGO programmes in the slums**

Ignorance was cited as a barrier to the success of NGOs, lack of proper communication skills, both written and spoken Swahili and English is a major hiccup to the work of NGOs. Broken communication means poorly implemented plans, and this greatly compromised the quality of work. Besides, the study indicates that lack of institutional commitment especially towards the welfare of poor people was evident in this study. For instance, instances of asking for bribes and being compromised by offenders were cited as stumbling block to NGOs search for justice. According to Banks, Hulme and Edwards (2014) NGOs are likely to suffer from lack of influence because they operate within development space devoid of political power gained from the people they represent unlike traditional forms of civil society organizations which membership based such as such as trade unions, religious organizations and social political movements therefore the need for collaboration towards consolidating the political voice they lack to influence policy.

The study also finds lack of adequate funds as a major obstacle for NGOs especially with the awareness of the massive populations in the slums that have high expectations on NGO support. When the NGOs cash transfers are delayed as the study found out, the slum beneficiaries greatly suffered. Porter (2003) contends that one key challenge to local based NGOs in the poorest countries is the need to get partners with channels for much needed funding. Moreover, Forkuor and Agyemang (2018) assert that inadequacy and delays in access to funding are among common challenges facing NGOs that affect them from meeting their targets on time or even resulting to incomplete projects. This study reveals that the fragmented nature of NGO programme can disturb the harmony within slum communities. Study findings highlighted possible cases of rejection/stigma towards supported children in the slums of Meru town. It is my view that while NGO projects are well intended caution needs to be taken to ensure that the programmes do not divide the community across those who benefit versus those who do not since this can greatly undermine the greater efforts of combating child poverty in the slums.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of NGOs in combating child poverty in slums of Meru town. Specifically, this study explored the understanding of poverty according to participant's perspectives, the Kenyan policy regarding NGOs work in the slums, the existing NGO programmes, perspectives of the participants on the effectiveness of NGOs and the challenges facing NGOs in the slums of Meru, Kenya.

Study findings revealed that child poverty is not distinguished from poverty in general and the multidimensional paradigm of poverty is predominant among the local slum dwellers and NGOs with focus on deprivations in education, health, housing, nutrition and water among other key aspects of human development dominating. The programmes implemented by NGOs however reflected their preference to educational programmes and but less on health, housing and water and sewerage making it arguable that they are not informed by the multidimensional approach to poverty eradication. This study concludes that NGOs need to expand further the space for participation of local slum people to ensure they contribute to understanding of poverty and what their priorities are based on their lived experiences at the levels of individual households and community at large. It is my view that participation of the local community in needs assessment is a crucial point of departure within poverty eradication programmes.

It is evident from the study that the Kenyan government seems to prefer NGOs aligned towards service provision rather than those working on structural issues like social justice and governance in the light of the government's definition in the NGO Act. This study therefore concludes that the government needs to reconceptualize and broaden the definition of NGOs to include all types of NGOs in Kenya irrespective of their roles, characteristics and structure. Besides, the study concludes that a more inclusive policy that recognizes NGOs as partners of the state is crucial to facilitate the much-needed cohesion between the state and NGOs seemingly characterized by incidents of tension according to this study. It is however not clear how the state would navigate through its role as a regulator/controller and still maintain a cordial partnership for a successful working relationship with the NGOs. To achieve this, I posit that the government needs to change its view of NGOs as challengers to its legitimacy



but rather important entities offering supplementary support to advance its development agenda. On top of regulating NGOs, the study further concludes that the Kenyan government needs to focus more on being an enabler to NGOs to achieve their objectives with less disruptions and censorship since they provide alternative solutions that the government is seemingly unable or disinterested to provide to slum dwellers. For instance, according to this study there is lack of adequate budgetary support to the government's slum development initiatives such as the Kenya slum upgrading programme (KENSUP) and other initiative which are established on ad hoc basis. Moreover, I am critical of the government's effort to cap international funding for NGOs as revealed in this study. Instead the government should encourage the NGOs to find more financial, human and technological resources that can increase their capacity of improving the lives of the slum people by lifting them out of extreme poverty. Moreover, the study concludes that the Kenyan government should consolidate a positive attitude towards NGOs particularly within its institutions such as the NGO coordination board, the police, line ministries and other key agencies to ensure NGOs operations are not impeded by the bureaucracy and corruption as highlighted by this study.

NGO programmes in the slums of Meru town appeared fragmented with the involvement of selected targeting thereby neglecting critical aspects of livelihood which made them lack the inclusive approach needed to combat poverty in the slums. It is clear from the findings that NGO programmes need to be expanded firstly to cover a wider scope of people living in slums because majority currently target one child per household and secondly focusing on stand-alone programmes such as education or selective housing support cannot be deemed good enough to challenge to the deeply entrenched child poverty in the slums. In conclusion, this study argue that it is important to explore the feasibility for NGOs to partner with the state in financing slums projects or possibly channeling their resources to the state to facilitate a more comprehensive approach to slum programmes. While this is seemingly an unconventional idea, particularly in the face of the existing neoliberal economic model in Kenya seeking to widen further the gap between the state and private actors in service provision the extreme nature of child and household poverty in the slums demands for innovative unorthodox solutions. In this vein, I advocate for an integrated development model between the state and NGOs in fighting child poverty in the slums.

In the light of this study, there remain questions whether the predominance of service providing NGO could be contributing to the lack of meaningful progress due to their inability

to address the root causes of child poverty in the slums. While the state seemingly supported service driven NGOs, their continued engagement in the slums has not addressed critical issues such as water and sanitation, housing and health due to apparent connection with structural factors that the current model cannot address. This study therefore concludes that extreme child poverty in the slums cannot be addressed through increased service provision alone but rather via integration of provision and democracy building through public participation within a framework that draws the attention of the state to the social-economic and political exclusion faced by slum dwellers. In this light, I argue that NGOs need to change their configuration to co-opt the role of democratization within their operational set up to create capacity for them to engage with the slum people in redefining the seemingly imbalanced power dynamic with the state. Consequently, this can create a platform for the people to demand for increased state responsibility through provision of universal programmes to the slum dwellers which the NGOs are currently unable to provide for. Study findings indicate that this would be a relatively challenging task considering the hostile political environment towards advocacy-based NGOs in Kenya. However, I find it a worthy cause to pursue if indeed NGOs are true to their agenda of combating poverty in the slums as this is a form of accountability to the welfare of the local slum communities but also one which can increase their legitimacy in the slums.

These study findings indicate that NGOs need to focus more on income generation initiatives among the slums dwellers. While the current microfinance programmes haven't achieved much, the study concludes that if improved and reorganized to offer more capital coupled with the technical training on business ventures they offer a promising solution in combating child poverty as well as challenging dependency syndrome which was said to develop among the jobless NGO beneficiaries. However, all NGO programmes need to be more inclusive particularly on gender in the light of 93% women participation in this study. Equal participation of men and women is important to ensure shared responsibility but also to ensure that no one gender is left behind by the transformation agenda of the NGO programmers and an opportunity to challenge seemingly retrogressive cultural practices such as patriarchy and gender roles which continue to disadvantage women.

The study also concludes that NGOs needs to engage more with the local people to challenge the elitist perception because it alienates the beneficiaries from the NGOs according to this

study. It is my view that both the NGOs and beneficiaries need each other and building mutual trust is vital for harmonious working relationship towards achieving the wider slum transformation agenda.

I am aware that this is a small scale study whose sample, data and findings cannot be generalized at the county, national or global levels. However, it is evident that child poverty in the slums and NGOs interventions needs further attention. In this light, I recommend implementation of a wider research in this important topic in order to generate new research knowledge that can be used to inform future policy and interventions in combating child poverty in the slums.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Interview guide for county official.**

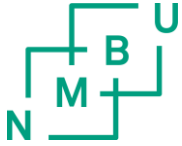
1. What is your job position within the county?
2. What is your view of the NGOs work in slums of Meru town?
3. How do you define child poverty?
4. Is there a structured policy from the country to guide NGOs work?
5. In what ways does the county ensure NGOs in Meru town is done within supportive operating environment?
6. What are common challenges do you face coordinating NGOs work in the town.
7. In your own view, do you think NGOs are improving the lives of children particularly in the slums of Meru town
8. Cite examples of NGOs ongoing projects that seem to have transformative impact on the children and families in slums
9. Are there areas of collaboration between the county government and NGOs child-based programmes?
10. Do you have forums that all NGOs meet to give feedback on their work with children and families in the slums?
11. Is it possible that NGOs are taking over or competing with both national and county governments to provide services to the people?

## **Appendix 2: Questionnaire for NGO representatives**

1. What is your job position in the NGO?
2. What is the NGO's definition of child poverty?
3. Describe the main programmes operated by this organisation to reduce child poverty in the slums?
4. What are the focus areas for the NGO towards reducing child poverty in the slums?
5. Explain how these programmes implemented?
6. What are the specific activities does the organisation undertake to implement the programmes?
7. Who are the key actors involved in the implementation of the programmes?
8. Describe the work conditions to you as the organisation?
9. Do you seek to find whether the work you do has impact on child poverty in the slums?
10. What do you think is the role of the state in the work NGOs do in the slums?
11. What are the main challenges you face as an organisation?

### **Appendix 3: Interview questions for beneficiary participants (parents/guardians)**

1. Do you know of any NGOs working to support families in the slums?
2. Have you as a family been beneficiary of any NGO programmes?
3. What support did the NGO offer to you and your children?
4. In this case, how do you define child poverty?
5. What made your child or household get selected by NGOs?
6. In your own opinion in what way has support received from the NGO has made any difference to you or your children?
7. Do you feel involved in the decision making on important matters when dealing with the NGO?
8. Do you think the support from NGOs is the best way to deal with the challenges in life?
9. Do you think there are other actors around who can be part of the solution to the challenges in the slums?
10. Are there things you may not have liked with the NGO programmes in the slums?



To whom it may concern

Our ref.  
**21.12.2017**

Your ref.

Date  
**21.12.2017**

**To whom it may concern**

The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), and specifically the Department of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric) accredits the field study that Eric Kimathi undertakes in Kenya. The study will gather data to analyse the role of NGOs in fighting child poverty.

Eric Kimathi will conduct fieldwork for his Master thesis at NMBU during January and February 2018. His nationality is Kenyan and his date of birth is 7.04.1988. NMBU is aware of his presence in Kenya.

NMBU and Noragric kindly request that this letter should provide satisfactory evidence of institutional affiliation for Eric Kimathi during his field work in Kenya.

Yours sincerely,

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